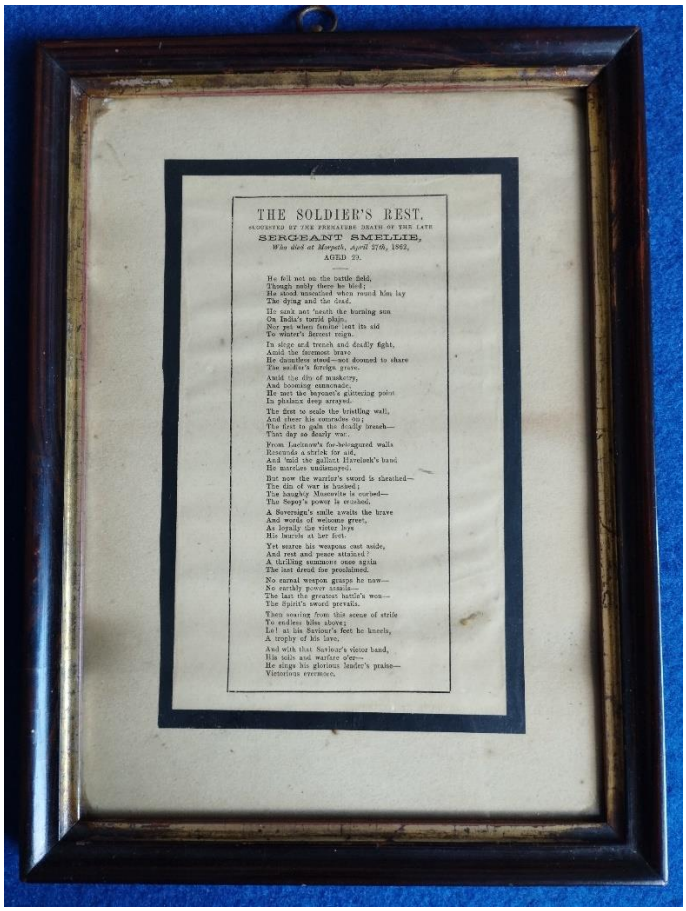
Meeting notes for the BMS Meeting 2.7.2026.

We had an impromptu discussion re: insurance and logging of members' medal collections preceded by short presentation about Sergeant James Smellie, 90th Light Infantry ['Perthshire Volunteers'].

As the original meeting content could not be delivered, this was an opportunity to hear more about the career, medals and ephemera of Sgt James Smallie, a native of Jesmond near Newcastle. As Smellie has featured in BMS presentations more than once in the last 10 years, I tried to focus on information that members may not have heard before! As members may remember, Smellie is also known as 'Smallie', 'Smaller' and 'Smillie' in the various documents and medals but I will refer to him as 'Smellie' in this text!

The relevance of Smellie for tonight's original discussion was his presence in the Indian Mutiny campaign: one of his medals is an Indian Mutiny medal with single clasp 'Defence of Lucknow'. After Smellie's premature demise aged 29 yrs, a poem had been composed about his career part of which referenced his involvement in Havelock's first relief force during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58.



THE SOLDIER'S REST.

SUGGESTED BY THE PREMATURE DEATH OF THE LATE

SERGEANT SMELLIE,

Who died at Morpeth, April 27th, 1862,

AGED 29.

He fell not on the battle field,
Though nobly there he bled;
He stood unscathed when round him lay
The dying and the dead.

He sank not 'neath the burning sun
On India's torrid plain,
Nor yet when famine laid its aid
To winter's fiercest reign.

In siege and trench and deadly fight,
Amid the fiercest brave
He dauntless stood—not doomed to share
The soldier's foreign grave.

Amid the din of musketry,
And booming cannonade,
He met the bayonet's glittering point
In phalanx deep arrayed.

The first to scale the bristling wall,
And cheer his comrades on;
The first to gain the deadly breach—
That day so fiendly won.

From Lucknow's foe-besieged walls
Resounds a shriek for aid,
And 'mid the gallant Havelock's band
His mercies unstinted.

But now the warrior's sword is sheathed—
The din of war is hushed;
The haughty Muswite is curbed—
The Sepoy's power is crushed.

A Sovereign's smile awaits the brave
And words of welcome greet,
As loyally the victor lays
His laurels at her feet.

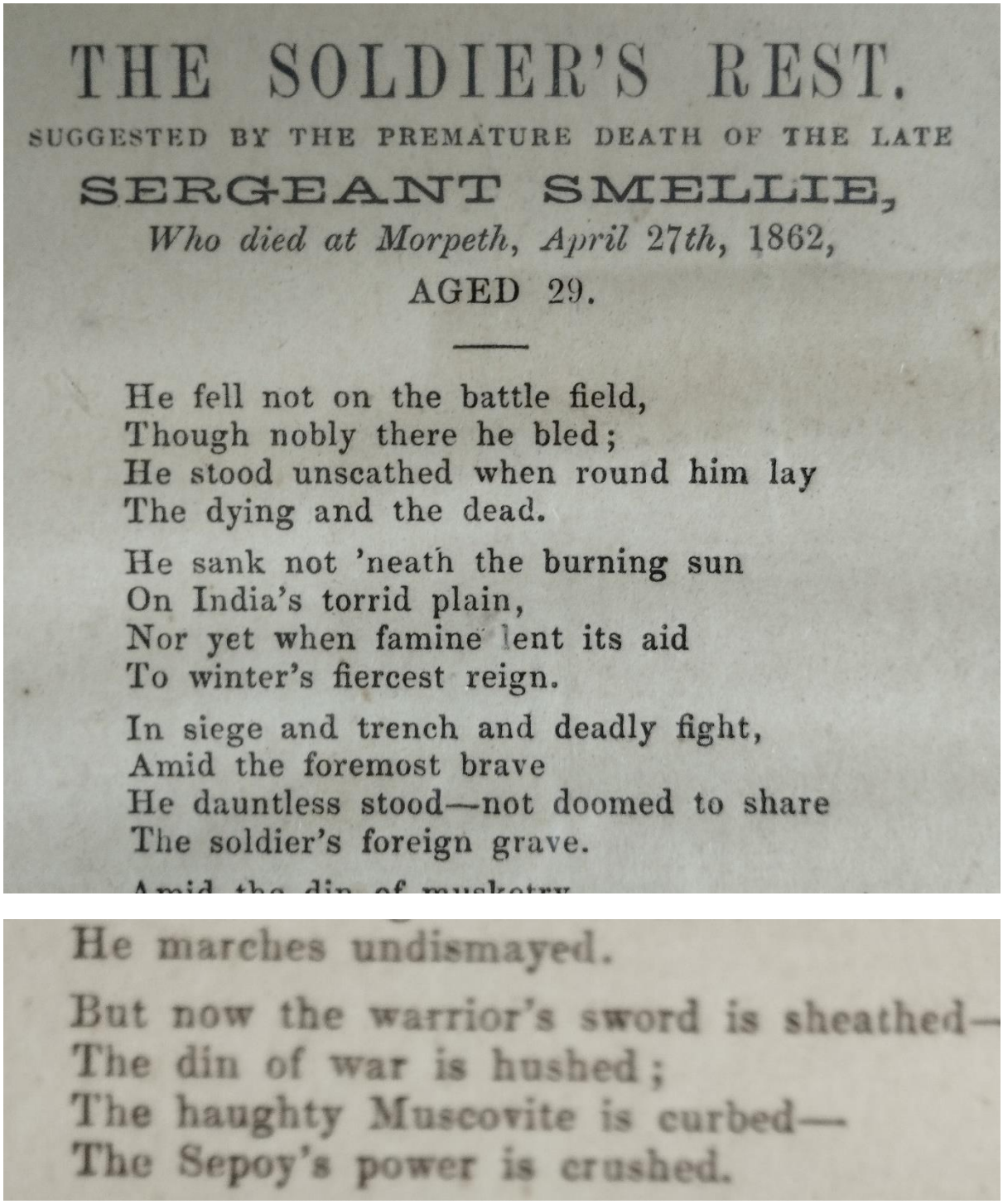
Yet scarce his weapons cast aside,
And rest and peace attained!
A thrilling summons once again
The last dread for proclaimed.

No earthly weapon grasps he now—
No earthly power assails—
The last the greatest battle's won—
The Spirit's sword prevails.

Then soaring from this scene of strife
To endless bliss above;
Let us his Saviour's feet he kneels,
A trophy of His love.

And with that Saviour's victor band,
His toils and warfare o'er—
He sings his glorious leader's praise—
Victorious evermore.

Photos above left and right: Smellie's obituary poem 'The Soldier's Rest' and Sgt James Smellie's Indian Mutiny medal [obverse] single clasp 'Defence of Lucknow'.



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Nor yet when famine lent its aid
To winter's fiercest reign.

In siege and trench and deadly fight,
Amid the foremost brave
He dauntless stood—not doomed to share
The soldier's foreign grave.

Amid the din of musketry

He marches undismayed.

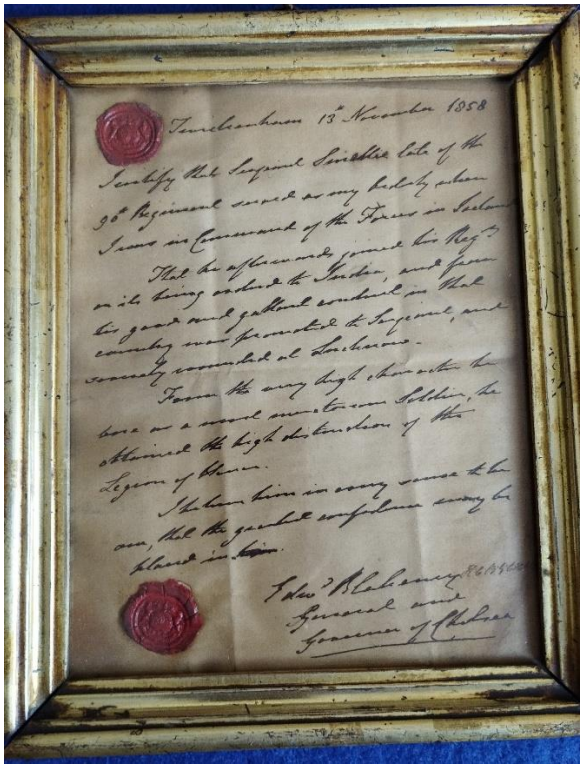
But now the warrior's sword is sheathed—
The din of war is hushed;
The haughty Muscovite is curbed—
The Sepoy's power is crushed.

Images above: Excerpts from 'The Soldier's Rest' referencing the Crimean campaign **'….The haughty Muscovite is curbed…'** and the Indian Mutiny **'..He sank not 'neath the burning sun On India's torrid plain…'** and **'…The Sepoy's power is crushed'.**

Other Smellie ephemera for members to peruse were his photograph, a hand written reference from General [later Field Marshal] Sir Edward Blakeney., GCB. GCH., the Governor of the Chelsea hospital complete with wax seals, his obituary poem 'The Soldier's Rest', other funerary information and a newspaper cutting from January, 1915 the latter item indicating the provenance of all the Smallie

items. I am very grateful to member contributions during and after the evening which have produced new information about Smallie.

Photos above: Sgt James Smellie and close-up of his medals – apologies for image quality – 'upper row' left to right: Crimea medal with clasp 'Sebastopol', Légion d'Honneur, Distinguished Conduct Medal and 'lower row' left: Indian Mutiny medal with 'Defence of Lucknow' clasp and right: Turkish Crimea.



Twickenham 13th November 1858

I certify that Sergeant Smellie late of the 90th Regiment served in my Brigade when I was in Command of the Troops in Scotland

That he afterwards joined his Regt in the East and was present at the Battle of Inkerman, and from the great and gallant conduct on that occasion was promoted to Sergeant, and recommended at the same time for the Victoria Cross.

From the very high character he bore as a soldier, he obtained the high distinction of the Legion of Honor.

I believe him in every sense to be one, that the gentle sex please may be found in him.

Edw[d] Blakeney Lieut-Gen
Governor of Chelsea

Photo left: Smellie reference written by General [later Field Marshal] Sir Edward Blakeney., GCB., GCH [in part transcribed below].

'Twickenham 13th November 1858

I certify that Sergeant Smellie late of the 90th Regiment served as my orderly when I was in command of the forces in Ireland.

That he afterwards joined his Regt in its being ordered to India and from his good and gallant conduct in that country was promoted to Sergeant and severely wounded at Lucknow.

Frome the very high character he bore as a decent meritorious solder, he obtained the high distinction of the Legion of Honour'.

Photo above: Smellie medal group: left to right: Obverses: DCM, Crimea with clasp 'Sebastopol', Indian Mutiny clasp 'Defence of Lucknow', Turkish Crimea and Légion d'Honneur. Note the last two medals in the wrong order!

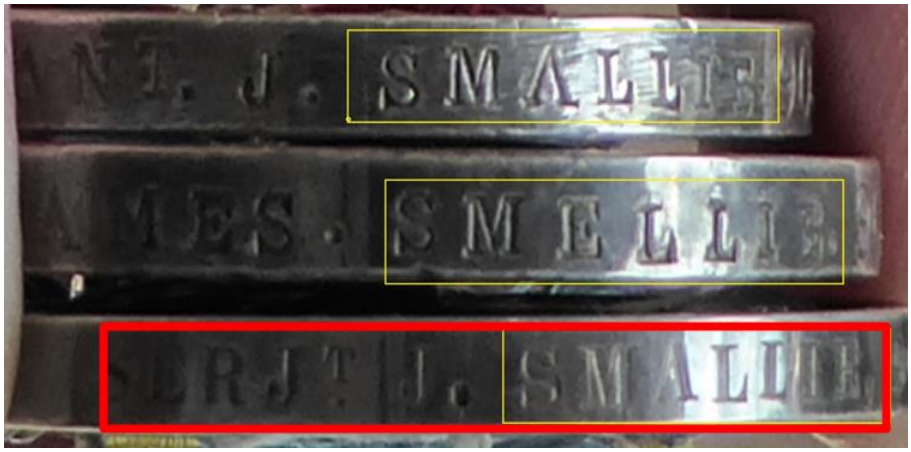


Photo above: Impressed naming on the Smellie medals: 'Smallie' with upside down 'V' representing an 'A' on the DCM, 'Smellie' on the Crimea medal and 'Smallie' on the Indian Mutiny medal.

Smellie had received his DCM for his bravery in the storming of the Redan at Sebastopol where he was one of the first to enter and was twice wounded. However, his award was as a result of another soldier's misdemeanor in that one intended recipient of the 90th LI, a private Nash, lost his entitlement to the DCM [and annuity] as a result of a theft conviction. Consequently, Smallie was chosen as the recipient. [reference Abbott's book 'Recipients of the DCM 1855-1909'] In that era, medal forfeiture did not always happen consistently as others with convictions were stripped of rank but had retained their DCM.

His bravery in the Redan was also reflected in the award by the French of the Légion d'Honneur. His name is shown as '2921 Sjt Joseph Smaller'. [see London Gazette supplement below].

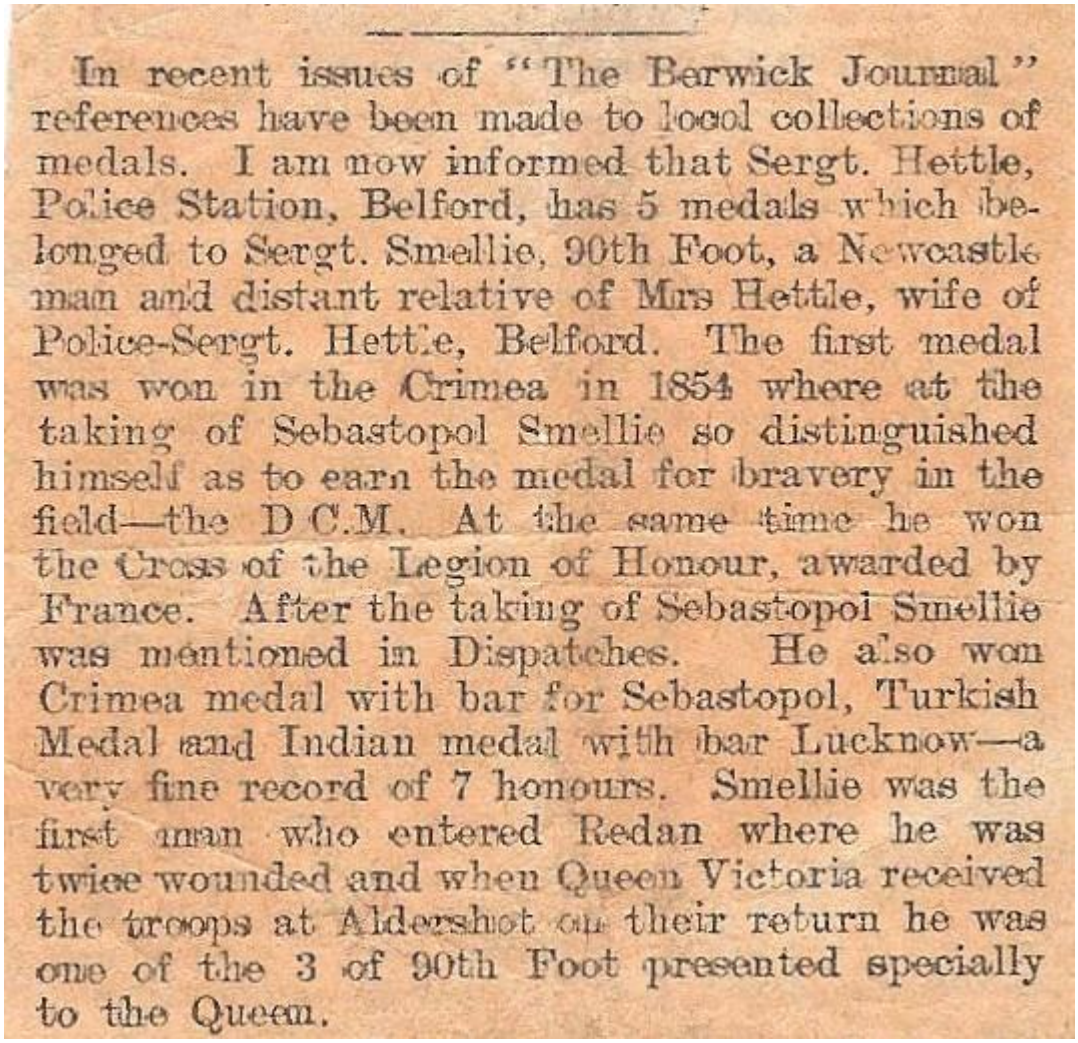
KNIGHTS (5TH CLASS)—*continued.*

Lieutenant and Adjutant William Wood, 42nd Regiment.
Colour-Serjeant Charles Christie, 42nd Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel William Mac Mahon, 44th Regiment.
Brevet-Major John Robinson, 44th Regiment.
Brevet-Major Richard Preston, 44th Regiment.
Assistant-Surgeon John Gibbons, 44th Regiment.
Private Robert Thimbleby, 44th Regiment.
Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Maxwell, 46th Regiment.
Brevet-Major George Dallas, 46th Regiment.
3492 Private William Bond, 46th Regiment.
3030 Private William Simpson, 46th Regiment.
Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel John Henry Lowndes, 47th Regiment.
Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel James Villiers, 47th Regiment.
Brevet-Major Charles Courtney Villiers, 47th Regiment.
Brevet-Major Charles Aldersey Stevenson, 47th Regiment.
Colour-Serjeant John Wilson, 47th Regiment.
Major Frederick West, 48th Regiment.
2730 Corporal Thomas Kelly, 48th Regiment.
Lieutenant-Colonel John Thornton Grant, C.B., 49th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel John Hynde King, 49th Regiment.
Brevet-Major James William Dewar, 49th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Cadwallader Adams, 49th Regiment.
Captain Thomas Priaulx St. George Armstrong, 49th Regiment.
Corporal James Butler, 49th Regiment.
Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Waddy, C.B., 50th Regiment.
Lieutenant-Colonel John Lucas Wilton, 50th Regiment.
Major Heathfield James Frampton, late 50th Regiment.
Brevet-Major Andrew Campbell Knox Lock, 50th Regiment.

KNIGHTS (5TH CLASS)—*continued.*

2773 Corporal Fletcher, 68th Regiment.
2330 Private John Ogden, 68th Regiment.
Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Ready, 71st Regiment.
Major William Hope, 71st Regiment.
Lieutenant-Colonel William Parke, 72nd Regiment.
Major Alexander Dalton Thellusson, 72nd Regiment.
Major William Rickman, Unattached, late 77th Regiment.
Brevet-Major Henry Robert Carden, 77th Regiment.
Captain Edward Henry Chawner, 77th Regiment.
Serjeant-Major Henry Borritt, 77th Regiment.
1825 Private Thomas Coonin, 77th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel William McCall, 79th Regiment.
Brevet-Major William Chanval Hodgson, 79th Regiment.
Captain Henry Wotton Campbell, 79th Regiment.
Lieutenant and Adjutant James Young, 79th Regiment.
Serjeant William Davie, 79th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Herbert Maxwell, 88th Regiment.
Brevet-Major Nathaniel Steevens, 88th Regiment.
Captain George Richard Browne, 88th Regiment.
Captain George Robert Beresford, 88th Regiment.
2453 Serjeant Thomas Goggins, 88th Regiment.
3257 Serjeant Joseph Grennan, 88th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Charles Aylmer, 89th Regiment.
Brevet-Major William Boyle, 89th Regiment.
Brevet-Major John Macdonald Cuppage, 89th Regiment.
Private John Fisher, 89th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Grove, 90th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Smith, 90th Regiment.
Captain Garnet Joseph Wolseley, 90th Regiment.
2921 Serjeant Joseph Smaller, 90th Regiment.
Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel John Alexander Ewart, 93rd Regiment.

Indian Mutiny: Gordon's 'British Battles and Medals' refers to 440 of the 90th LI being awarded the clasp 'Defence of Lucknow' during the mutiny as part of the 1st Relief Force under Sir Henry Havelock.[Gordon lists the 1st Relief Force clasp total as 2716]. It was during this action that Smellie was wounded by a gunshot wound to the right knee the day before Sir Colin Campbell's relief force arrived 14th November, 1857.



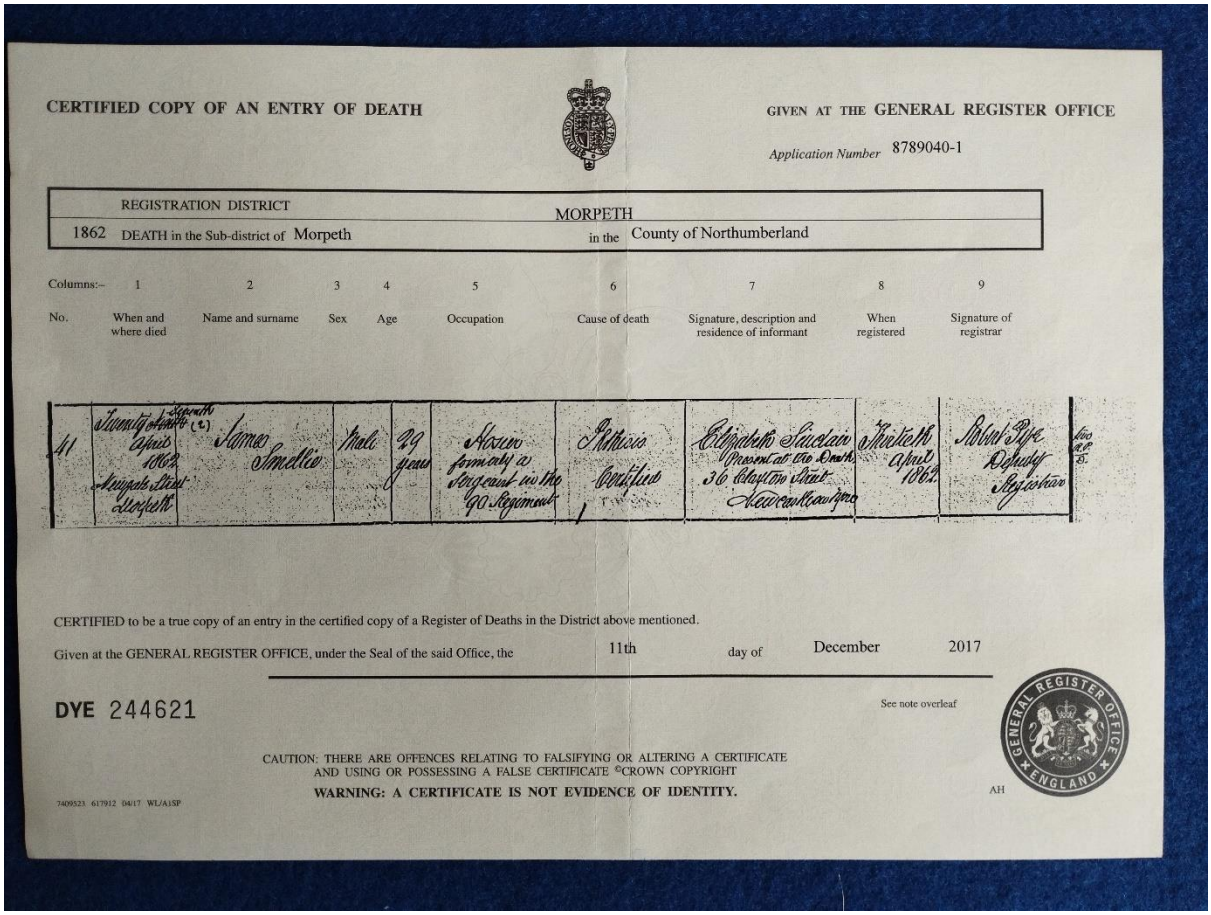
In recent issues of "The Berwick Journal" references have been made to local collections of medals. I am now informed that Sergt. Hettle, Police Station, Belford, has 5 medals which belonged to Sergt. Smellie, 90th Foot, a Newcastle man and distant relative of Mrs Hettle, wife of Police-Sergt. Hettle, Belford. The first medal was won in the Crimea in 1854 where at the taking of Sebastopol Smellie so distinguished himself as to earn the medal for bravery in the field—the D C.M. At the same time he won the Cross of the Legion of Honour, awarded by France. After the taking of Sebastopol Smellie was mentioned in Dispatches. He also won Crimea medal with bar for Sebastopol, Turkish Medal and Indian medal with bar Lucknow—a very fine record of 7 honours. Smellie was the first man who entered Redan where he was twice wounded and when Queen Victoria received the troops at Aldershot on their return he was one of the 3 of 90th Foot presented specially to the Queen.

Pictures above: Newspaper cutting from January 1915 'The Berwick Journal' detailing the provenance of the Smellie medals and other information from Sgt Smellie's original obituary in 'The Morpeth herald'.

On the regiment's return to Aldershot after the Crimean War, he was one of three soldiers chosen to be presented to Queen Victoria when she visited.

On 6th April, 1859, he married a spinster Isabella Young.

When his health began to fail 'under the progress of a disease contracted amid the privations and endurances of foreign service and under the influence of a foreign clime', he retired to Morpeth where his comfort was attended to by the 'most dutiful and affectionate of wives'. His death certificate gives the cause of death as 'Phthisis'. This is an archaic term for a particularly severe and debilitating form of Tuberculosis ['TB'] with rapid bodily wasting leading to death. TB even in recent years was commonly known as 'Consumption' and the form previously called phthisis known as 'Galloping Consumption'. Note there is no equine connection!!



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 8789040-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT MORPETH

1862 DEATH in the Sub-district of Morpeth in the County of Northumberland

Columns:– 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
41	Twenty Seventh (27) April 1862 Newgate Street Morpeth	James Smellie	Male	29 years	Hosier formerly a Sergeant in the 90 Regiment	Phthisis Certified	Elizabeth Sinclair Present at the Death 36 Clapton Street Newcastle upon Tyne	Thirtieth April 1862	Robert Pye Deputy Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 11th day of December 2017

DYE 244621

See note overleaf

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE ©CROWN COPYRIGHT

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

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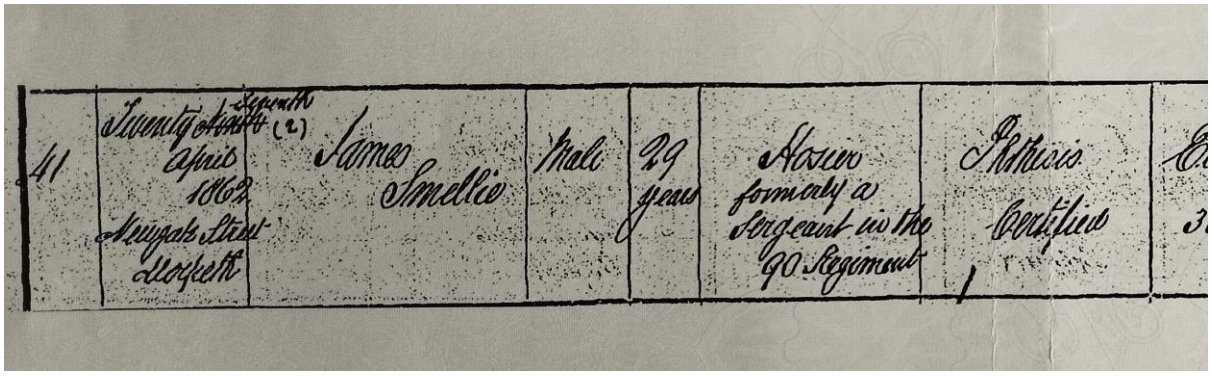

<u>Images above</u>: Copy of James Smellie's death certificate.

His obituary report from 'The Morpeth herald' highlighted Smellie's importance in the rifle movement in the Jesmond area, described the funerary procession, mournful music, the prayer and address given by Smellie's childhood friend the Reverend Mr Bell and the volley of three shots fired over the grave by the Rifle Volunteers at the end of the ceremony. The final sentence reads: 'The day being extremely fine a considerable number of people assembled to witness the funeral ceremony, many of whom were personally acquainted with the deceased'.

Discussion re Insurance and Logging of Collections:

The following general points were raised in about 40 minutes of discussion:

1. Insurance of medals and the hazard of being underinsured.

2. Consider 'Doomsday' scenario [loss of entire collection in total disaster].

3. Instead of insuring a large medal collection, consider insuring them as many smaller collections of less than £5K [one member found this reduced the cost].

4. How to pass on your medals to family – 'PET's [potentially exempt transfers].

5. Logging your medals: most of us admitted we did not know *exactly* where *all* our medals were.

6. There was a sense of members not having available time to do this administrative exercise.

7. Various methods were in use for logging our collections for next-of-kin – from paper based to excel spreadsheets with links. One concern was how ephemera and other items linked to a medal group were logged - these could easily be unintentionally separated. *There is no single best method!*

8. The BMS can help – several members have expertise in valuation of medals/emphemera. Advice to any member's family needing such advice is firstly*, not to throw anything away!*

These were the main points of tonight's discussion. Please note insurance of collections had featured in an earlier BMS meeting in 2023.

Typed 25.7-1.8.2026.

Chris Davies

BMS Secretary/President.

With my usual apologies for errors/typos.

All photos by C Davies