



**No. 4**

**2025**

## 50 Years of Membership, Memories

By Paul Vickers

The BMSS 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show in Reading was a great success and it was a most enjoyable day for all. For the Society to have 90 years of unbroken activity is a remarkable achievement and our long history should make every member proud.

For myself, this year is also a personal milestone, for August 2025 marks 50 years since I joined the BMSS. I realise that for our more senior members I am probably still something of a newcomer, but half a century in the Society has caused me some reflection on what has happened over those years. In *Bulletin* issue 2/2025 was a reprint of the late Michael Creese's article on model soldier developments since the 1940s. As would be expected from Michael, it was a masterful summary so I will not attempt to cover the same ground, but instead look at my experiences in the BMSS since 1975.

The main reason for joining was a desire to meet other like-minded model soldier enthusiasts. As I related when the

much-missed Roy Dilley died, it was his articles in *Airfix Magazine* which first got me interested in model soldiers, instead of all the other plastic kits which I loved to build when I was a young lad growing up in Sheffield. Shortly afterwards, Airfix began issuing their "Collectors Series" of 54mm plastic kits, which I did with great enthusiasm. Through the modelling magazines I was aware of Historex, which were stocked by Marcway Models in Attercliffe Road, Sheffield, so when I could get a bit of money I bought the occasional Historex and marvelled at the level of detail and the elegance of the figures. Roy's inspiration meant that I loved conversions, and many Airfix figures became something quite different from the originals.

I left Sheffield in 1973 when I went to Loughborough as a student. From there I got a job with the Ministry of Defence in Christchurch, Dorset, which I started in August 1975. I knew no-one in the area, but was aware



Some of the Aldershot members at the Aldershot Military Museum in 2000. Left to right: Reg Davis, Dick Stringer, Ian Wright, Harry Strongman.

that there was a British Model Soldier Society through the various modelling magazines, so sent off my joining application. Once enrolled I wrote to the Secretary, who at that time was John Ruddle, asking if there were any members near Christchurch or Bournemouth. John replied with contact details of the South Hants Branch, which met in Southampton, as that was the nearest to where I was. The meetings were in a school at Hedge End, so it was train ride from Christchurch to Southampton and then a bus to Hedge End. Turning up for the first time, determined not to be late, I was too early and there was no-one there when I arrived. Fortunately after a couple of minutes a chap came in who introduced himself as Tony Chown, and warmly welcomed me as a new recruit.

There could have been no better introduction to the BMSS than this group. Along with Tony there was John Cox, John Sanders, Terry Nappin, and many others who were welcoming, enthusiastic, and generous with advice and encouragement for this young novice. I am forever grateful to them all. The monthly meetings became a highlight, and they shortly moved to a more central location in Southampton which saved a bus ride. I started to go with the branch to model shows, including the BMSS Annual Competitions in Chelsea Town Hall. What a revelation - so many fellow hobbyists and such superb work on display. An inspiration to work on my own techniques and do better.

When work took me to live in Salisbury I continued to attend South Hants, being no further than it had been from Bournemouth, and I also met up with local group headed by Tom Ridout. Meeting people around the shows meant that when I eventually moved to Aldershot in 1983, I already knew quite a few of the Aldershot folks such as Reg Davis, Harry Strongman, David Bracey, Brian Harrison, Brian Ballard, Chris Parkin, Jack Higgs, John Gardner, and many others. Only a national society could have created such a network.

It was John Cox who got me involved with the National Committee. When Morry Miles stepped down as editor of the *Bulletin* John decided to nominate me, in the curious belief that because I was a professional librarian I should know something about publications. Rashly I agreed and became editor in 1984. This required attending committee meetings, then held monthly in the National Army Museum, which meant a rush to catch a train immediately after work. Roy Dille was the Chairman, David Pearce Secretary, and Ian Webb Treasurer. In the obituary of the late John Regan I commented on his invaluable help and advice to me as the new Editor. Also on the committee was Brian Haycock, a professional printer who was likewise most helpful. After the meetings I would go with David Pearce to the nearby Orange Brewery pub for a drink and chat, before a late train back to Aldershot. It is astonishing now to remember the primitive method of producing the *Bulletin* back in 1984. In that pre-digital age, articles arrived by post on paper. If hand-written, I would type them up on a manual typewriter, then compile as much as I thought would fill an issue based mainly on a rough word count, and send all the paper to the printer. He then set the text and returned the proofs laid out to the standard column width of the magazine. I would then cut them up and glue them

onto page templates to show the printer how the pages should look, including spaces for photos (no scanning or digital images in those days, the photos were prints which were sent to the printer, marked up with the size to which they should be for the page). These days people using computers talk about "cut and paste", probably without thinking that in times now gone text and pages were literally cut and pasted into position. Everything was then posted back to the printer, followed by an agonising wait until the magazine was actually sent out to see if the pages looked as I had expected.

Needless to say, this whole process was time-consuming, slow (as there were multiple postings back and forth), and expensive, as so much was done by the printer who naturally charged for his time. When home PCs started to be available I persuaded the committee that this was the way forward. All the tedious proofing, cutting and pasting could be avoided if the Editor compiled the magazine and laid out the pages on a PC which were then sent to the printer. At this time the photos could not be included, as home scanners were a long way off and the memory available on early PCs was insufficient for high-resolution images, but it was a start. The early desk-top publishing software was also somewhat primitive so unfortunately the text quality suffered, but the cost savings were essential to enable the Society to continue publishing its magazine. The time taken to produce a *Bulletin* meant that the "news" tended not to be very current, plus the issues were only every three months so it was difficult to keep members up to date with what was happening. To get around this I proposed the issue of the *Bulletin Extra*, which initially came out with the main *Bulletin* and another four issue between magazines, so eight issues a year. At the same time, John Regan had the idea for the *BMSS Handbook*, a reference work with pages sent out with each *Bulletin*. So for a while we were producing 4 *Bulletins*, four *Handbooks*, and eight *Extras* per year. Eventually the *Extras* with the *Bulletins* were dropped, just coming out between issues of the main magazine.

*To be continued*



*Peter Ledger looks over the extensive range of "Members' Collection" figures, at the model soldier weekend at the National Collection, Hatfield House, 2004.*

# Nostalgia Catalogue

*By The Editor*

Following on from the previous issue of The Bulletin here are two more pages from the Nostalgia Catalogue.



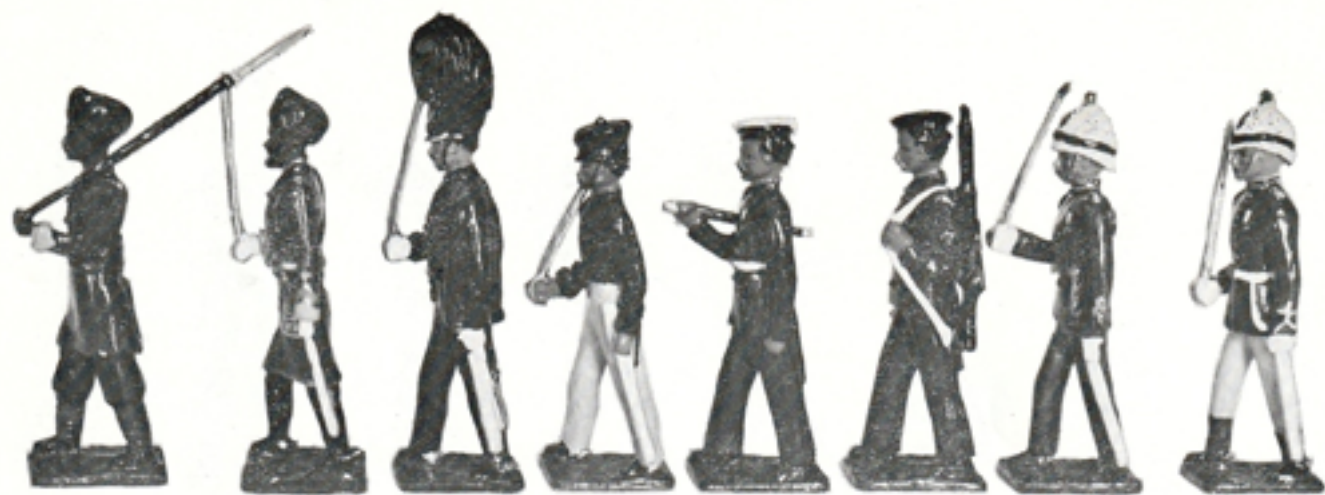
Left to right, Ceylon Lascar Corps, c. 1896 (2), Kachin Military Police, Burma 1900 (2), Indore Artillery, 1897 (2), Meywar Bhil Corps, 1897 (2).



Left to right, Drum and Bugle Band of the Wei-Hai-Wei 1st Chinese Regiment, 1902 (4), Alwar Lancers c. 1902 (2), British Gusana Police, 1897 (2).



Left to right, Maharaja of Gwalior, 1861 (1), Gwalior Bera Ekkans (1), British Central Africa Regiment, 1900 (2), Bombay Sappers and Miners, c. 1897 (2 and mule).



Left to right. Bharatpur Infantry, c. 1902 (2). Cape Mounted Rifles (Imperial), c. 1850 (2). Malta Militia Division, Submarine Engineers, Royal Engineers, 1897 (2). New South Wales Field Artillery, 1897 (2).



Left to right. Malay Armed Police, 1897 (2). Queensland Mounted Rifles, 1897 (2). Cyprus Zaptiehs, 1897 (2). 1st West India Regiment, 1874 (2).



Left to right. Mohawk Institute Cadets, 1902 (2). George Augustus Frederick, last crowned King of the Mosquito Indians, c. 1845 (1). Mosquito Indian, c. 1845 (1). 2nd West India Regiment, 1887 (2). Indian Mutiny Veterans, Delhi Durbar, 1903 (2).

# National Army Museum

Rod Johnson

The National Army Museum has an extensive collection of toy and model soldiers, of which a selection is displayed in the museum in Chelsea in two areas. In the lower ground floor, adjacent to the Templar Study Centre, is a double sided case displaying Britain's and similar manufacturers "Toy Soldiers". This recently created exhibit was put on display for the public in March 2021. The case contains 160 individual items categorised into separate sections for infantry, cavalry, artillery, logistics, engineers, medical and staff.



Items that have been digitised will have a clickable link through the NAM Online Collection, which contains images and more detailed information; <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/>

An example of the data held for each individual figure or vehicle is shown to the right:

The second area of display is also on the lower ground to be found opposite the lift doors. This display, containing over 400 items, was prepared in the summer of 2022. There are three joined display cases, each of six shelves, the exhibits

range from a large scale vehicle, AFV and artillery piece, OO Gauge railway stock for the Royal Corps of Transport, through the ranks of toy soldiers, Dinky Military Vehicles and singularly mounted and displayed 54mm model soldiers covering mainly the British Indian Army with a few odd Napoleonic and others. A whole central shelf in the middle case is taken up by a 1:32 vignette of the SAS Pink Panther and the Kings African Rifles 1917 diorama in 30mm "Willie" figures (the 1974 winner of the BMSS Clegg Award by C.R.Clegg). In all an interesting display and yet a missed opportunity to showcase the best of the military modelling hobby and its integration in military history.

Although it is intended to have all object available to view through the Online Collection there is still quite an amount of work to be undertaken in digitising the collection. However, for our purposes, the models that are on display can all be found in

## Model soldier, William Britain Limited, despatch rider, Motor Cycle Corps, 1935 (c)

Manufactured by William Britain Limited, London, Set 200, 1935 (c).

Model motorcycle despatch rider from a boxed set of four figures on motorbikes.

During World War One 1914-1918 the despatch riders of the Royal Engineers and Royal Corps of Signals fulfilled a vital role in maintaining communications, sometimes under extremely difficult conditions. On the Western Front they often had to force their way through mud clogged with heavy traffic, and along muddy trails, frequently under fire.

William Britain began producing toy soldiers and military miniatures in 1893 and soon gained a reputation for making the most truly detailed and historically accurate figures available. The company continues to manufacture them today.

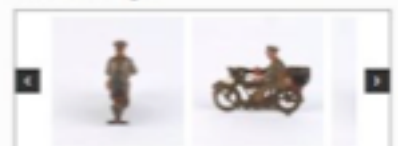
Part of the Dr R N P Sutton Collection.

NAM Accession Number

10A3C 2004-09-82-3



Additional Images





the online collection. Unfortunately, the Online Collection Database is not very friendly and some persistence in searching using differing descriptions may be necessary. As an example, I tried unsuccessfully to locate the entry for Clegg's diorama even having an accurate title for the piece and using many other descriptive words. Typing "soldier, model" in the search term brings up 172 results, virtually all "Toy Soldiers" and none of the Indian Army models (Ensign or Tradition) - frustrating!

If the description of the item you search for is accepted, there is some interesting information to be found. An example would be searching for "Model soldier, 15th Ludhiana Sikhs" will reveal excellent information. (Worth a look....)

<https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=2006-08-46-1>

If you wish to pursue more, all the items that are held in the museum's collection can be found on the online inventory, but this holds minimal info Online Inventory. Arrangements can be made to view particular items through the museum.

Lead alloy figure, representing 12th Cavalry (Frontier Force), 1922-1947.	Models	1959-12-220
Twelve lead alloy model soldiers, 1903 (c).	Models	1959-08-126
Six model figures representing soldiers of the Middlesex units, 1865 (c)	Models	1959-02-35
Seven plaster figurines, representing Sikh soldiers of 15th (Pioneers) Regiment of Punjab Infantry, 1857-1859.	Crafts	1952-03-23
Box set of model soldiers, British Infantry, Tropical Dress, rd; manufactured by William Britains Limited, London, 'Armies of the World' series, Box Set No 1294, 1934-1940. Part of the Dr R N P Sutton Collection.	Models	2004-09-19

Above: Section of search result from "Online Inventory"



# Bugle Call

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2025**  
**10.00am - 4.30pm**

Presented by the Bristol Area Branch of the British Model Soldier Society &  
Planet Figure

Adults £5, Children under 12 £2, Senior £4, Family £9



## **Nailsea School, "The Link"**

**Mizzymead Road, Nailsea, North Somerset BS48 2HN**

**FREE PARKING!**

Probably the largest exhibition of military models in the South West. Numerous displays of models including fantasy / garage kits, aircraft, ships and miniature figures.

Hot and cold drinks and snacks available and a large selection of trade stands and modelling and painting demonstrations and **COMPETITIONS**.

Exhibitor contact details; Kevin Peart – [slenderboy0247@gmail.com](mailto:slenderboy0247@gmail.com)

Trader contact details: Bob Orr – [boborr@talktalk.net](mailto:boborr@talktalk.net)

Advertising contact details: Paul Lawday – [paul.gc.lawday@gmail.com](mailto:paul.gc.lawday@gmail.com)

Facebook – Bugle Call Bristol BMSS

**Support model soldier shows! Support model soldier traders!**

## **BMSS Diary 2025/26**

October 17	<b>Zoom Meeting- Armies of Europe</b> , 7pm-9pm. All members will be automatically sent a link via email to access the meeting.
October 18/19	<b>Scale Model Challenge</b> . 9.30am-5pm. NH Eindhoven Conference Centre, Netherlands
November 7	<b>Zoom Meeting- Pre-Auction</b> , 7pm-9pm. All members will be automatically sent a link via email to access the meeting.
November 8/9	<b>Scale ModelWorld</b> , 10am-6pm, The International Centre, Telford, Shropshire TF3 4JH
Nov 21	<b>BMSS Auction</b> , 5pm, St.Saviour's Church Hall, St. George's Square, Pimlico, London SW1 3QW. BMSS members only.
Nov 30	<b>Bugle Call</b> , 10am-4.30pm. Nailsea School, Mizzymead Road, Nailsea, North Somerset BS48 2HN
Dec 6	<b>Toy Soldier &amp; Plastic Modelling Show</b> , 9.30am-4.00pm, Haverstock School, Haverstock Hill, Chalk Farm, London NW3 2BQ
Dec 19	<b>Zoom Meeting - Old Toy Soldier</b> , 7pm-9pm. All members will be automatically sent a link via email to access the meeting.

### **"Bulletin" Schedule 2025/26**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Copy Date</b>	<b>Publication</b>
Buletin No.4	6th October	17th November
Bulletin Extra No.1	19th January	Early February
Bulletin No.1	23rd February	16th March
Bulletin Extra No.2	20th April	Early May
Bulletin No.2	25th May	15th June
Bulletin Extra No.3	15th June	End of July

### **BMSS Logo clothing**



**How to Order:** We have set up an arrangement with JANCRAFT for clothing with an embroidered BMSS logo badge, a similar design to the existing letterhead and pin badge shown on the left.

Individual members can contact JANCRAFT for clothing orders – preferably by email so that our contact, Julian, can reply with a cost and payment details. You can also contact him by phone. Members should give the item code\* and delivery address with your email contact where possible and a mobile/telephone number.

\*All the details of the types of clothing, sizes and colours are shown on JANCRAFT's on-line catalogue. Find it at [www.jancraft.com](http://www.jancraft.com) This also includes the code number for each item in the catalogue. Then you need to specify the colour of your choice and the size.

**JANCRAFT address is:** [3 High Park Avenue, Wollaston, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3NJ](https://www.jancraft.com)

**Email address:** [mail@jancraft.com](mailto:mail@jancraft.com) **Telephone:** 01384 396226.