

I. Collections Level Description

Department: Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive, Gillingham, Kent

Collection Type: North America and Tibet

Reference: REMLA.COLLECTION

No. of items: 12

Notes

Date of research visit: 1st-2nd May 2014 Contact: Rebecca Nash, Curator and Danielle Sellers, Deputy Curator (Collections Management)



Category

Clothing and Accessories
Photographs
Silverware

Description

INTRODUCTION: The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive is situated in Gillingham, Kent. The collection has its origins in the late 19th Century when the library, model room, mess collections and other teaching aids were amalgamated into one museum. The first paid curator was employed in 1910 and the museum that finally emerged in 1912 was based on the 'prime need for exhibiting trophies of the various campaigns, peace-time relics and old uniforms' and was displayed chronologically campaign by campaign, as it still is today.

It opened in its current premises in the late 1980s. The museum has a large collection, but highlights are the objects collected by and associated with Major General Charles Gordon (this forms the bulk of their non-European objects), and their large collection of photographs (over 600 albums).

OBJECTS:

I. North America, Canada

REMLA.4201.35.1-5 North American clothing – a tailored moose skin coat with multi-coloured geometric and floral quillwork, a pair of leggings, one mitten, a satchel and a pair of boots. The boots had historically been incorrectly identified as moccasins and have since been identified as Siberian. There was also a pair of paddles which were disposed on of March 1931.

These objects are associated with Captain Hampden Clement Blamire Moody who served in Canada from 1840-1848, mainly at Fort Garry (Red River area), the Hudson's Bay Company trading post. He was involved in confidential work for the company 1844-46 and may have worn this outfit as a disguise. Whilst in Canada he also made sketches of the landscape and his activities.

There was a sizable file of documentation and correspondence relating to these objects which dates to the early 1990s when a former member of staff (Simon Jones) was conducting research about the coat.

REMLA.4901.53.4 Bag decorated with porcupine quillwork of double thunderbird design, late 18th-mid 19th century

II. Tibet

REMLA.8003.2.1-10 Tibetan clothes bought in Sikkim in 1922 by Col. A. Jackson. This includes hats, shoes, a scarf, a dress, a waistcoat, an apron and a blouse.

There is also a piece in the mess silverware collection which is a silver replica of a 'Tibetan Chorten' on a wooden plinth bearing the inscription 'Thibet 1903-4'. It is a copy of an original chorten in the possession of Major-General Sir James MacDonald who was the military commander of the mission sent to Lhasa in 1903.

PHOTOGRAPHS: REMLA have an excellent collection of photographs (over 600 albums dating back to the 1850s), especially ethnographic photographs. The Royal Engineers were involved in survey work for map making and boundary marking, and therefore the soldiers provided sketches and illustrations. This in turn resulted in an involvement in the development of photography in its early years and explains the large high quality photograph collection at the museum.

This early pioneering of photography is reflected in: Schaw, H., 1860, 'Notes on Photography'. In Papers on subjects connected with the duties of the Corps of Royal Engineers, new series, Vol. IX, 108-128

I. North America, Canada

5 x albums relating to the North American Boundary Commission:
REMLA.6/33 A-B 1860-1861 Vol.1 and Vol.2 (original/official Royal Engineers Photos)

REMLA.6/33/C-E 1872-1875 Vol.1-3 (copies from the National Photography Collection. Public Archives, Canada)

There is an archival file [REMLA.M.2026] which relates to the Boundary Commission, which contains a draft manuscript by A. J. Birrell, Director of the National Photography Collection. Public Archives, Canada, titled 'North American Boundary Commission 1857-62' (1981).

II. Tibet

REMLA.4.106 1 x album of photographs belonging to Colonel A. M. Lang CB Bengal Sappers and Miners (1852-88) of the Hindustan-Tibet Road. Pre-dates Younghusband Mission, this expedition took place from 1863 to 1864. The album was presented to the museum by his grandson in 1980. Subsequent research has identified some prints in this album as photographs attributed to Samuel Bourne (1843-1912), a British photographer who set up Bourne and Shepherd whilst in India.

1 x album REMLA.5.23 of photographs taken during two campaigns - the 'Tirah Expedition 1897-98' and the 'Tibet Mission Force 1903-04'. The album belonged to Chelsea Pensioner J. H. White and was presented to the museum by his son in 1967.

The museum does have facilities and equipment for scanning images upon request.

Production information:

Place: Tibet, Asia
Date: Canada, North America

Name Associations	Type	Note
The Royal Engineers	regiment/service	
Bengal Sappers and Miners	regiment/service	
3rd Company, 1st Sappers and Miners	regiment/service	
Moody, Hampden Clement	personal name	
Blamire, Captain (1821-1869)	personal name	
Gordon, General Charles, Major (1833-1885)	personal name	
White, J. H., 1897-1904 (fl.)	personal name	Chelsea Pensioner
Lang, Arthur Moffat, Colonel (1832-1916)	personal name	Bengal Sappers and Miners (1852-1888). His memoirs were published in the Royal Engineers Journal in October 1916.

Associations	Type	Note
North American Boundary Commission (1860-1875)	event	
Tirah Expedition (1897-1898)	event	
Younghusband Mission to Tibet (1903-1904)	event	

Exhibitions

Name of exhibition: *Encounters: Photograph Albums and Their Stories (22nd October 2013 to 30th May 2014)*

Exhibition area: Royal Engineers Museum

Notes:

A temporary exhibition funded by the Arts Council England, and Elizabeth Edwards (Research Professor in Photographic History and Director of Photographic History Research Centre, De Montfort University) was a consultant on the project. Staff at the Pitt Rivers Museum also advised on the project. This is designed to be a travelling exhibition,

although other venues had not yet been confirmed.

Blog posts related to this exhibition written by Ulrike Bessel can be found at <http://www.re-museum.co.uk/blog/author/photography/>

Bibliographic references

[1846] History of the Royal Sappers and Miners, pp.461-464

Porter, Whitworth, Major General. 1951. History of the Corps of Royal Engineers.

Napier, Gerald. 2005. Follow the Sapper: An Illustrated History of the Corps of Royal Engineers. Institution of Royal Engineers.

The Royal Engineers Journals, 1905-2005 (digital copy). See March 1905 for article about Tibet by Moore.