



Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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December 2014

IF ONLY I COULD TALK - THIS IS MY STORY.

THE NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL - with Copenhagen 1801 Bar

by Garry Milne

I was awarded to **Commander William Milne** of the Royal Navy in 1848. This is my history.

He earned the medal in 1801 with the clasp for Copenhagen, but would have to wait 47 years to receive it. It is minted with a shiny figurehead of my young Queen Victoria. My backside is a sculpture of Britannia with her trident, seated on a sea horse. The image is intended to display our speed and length of travel over the oceans of the world, guarded by the goddess of courage and safety. You know that "Britannia Ruled The Waves". Well, I hang proudly from a ribbon of Navy Blue and White, on the chest of brave and salty crews of mariners.



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CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is a non-profit registered society
which fosters the study of the
military and the police, and the heritage of
Canada, the British Empire, and the world
as well as the preservation of military
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month
at:

Petty Officers' Mess
HMCS Tecumseh
1820 - 24th Street SW
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

All are welcome to attend

Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on
Tuesday, December 16th, 2014
19:00 (7:00 pm)

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.

Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:

- Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting
- Correspondence, Membership report
- Treasurer's report, Old business / New business
- Break, Show & Tell

The President, Kevin R. would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.

My owner served on board HMS Elephant at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801. He was just a young "limey", a new recruit with a Midshipman's posting. The battle was pretty scary; the Danish fleet and their shore batteries had the ability to blow a hole right through our ship's walls, and take your head clean off in the process. Captain Nelson was on board, and this had a big influence on the crew; he was beaming with confidence, and at one point, held his telescope up to his blind eye when the signals from the fleet's flag ship instructed us to retreat. We were sweating from fear of close action as we sailed into the harbour and blasted the tar out of the enemy. We won the battle that day.

My owner was born in Carron in 1782, a village just West of Edinburgh, known famously for production of the Carronade cannon, fitted into just about every British Man-of-War in the fleet. William learned about cannons from his grand-father, who would take him to the smelting yards, where he worked for The Carron Company; a lawyer from it's inception in 1760.

His father also William Milne (A), was a Captain; a first Lieutenant in the Royal Navy for 33 years. He was on the ship when Britain captured and transported Napoleon Bonaparte to prison on St. Helena's Island. He would have been awarded one of my medals with bars for battles in Abukir Bay, Egypt and Montevideo Uruguay. He died in 1826 in Upper Canada, and had to be alive in 1847 to be awarded the NGS medal. I like being owned by brave naval crews!

My owner spent 43 years in the Royal Naval service, in Britain, the Canada's, on the Seven Seas, and West Indies; was an Upper Canada Provincial Naval Captain on "The Great Lakes" - later a Commander retiring on his ranch outside of Melbourne, Australia in 1847. With Prize Money and land grants and on half-pay of the Royal Navy, he could live comfortably, and Naval lists raised him to Master and Commander Rank. A warm estate retirement was what he needed.



HMS Elephant

Minutes of the last meeting

Meeting called to order: 7:15

19 Members present 0 guests

Newsletter

Tony Gee has not been receiving his newsletter. Will investigate.

Motion to approve as printed moved Bob Mc Seconded Don S. Carried

No Mail

Treasurer's report / Membership Report Moved Brian Seconded Bob Mc Carried

Old Business

Christmas Party: Dave S. inquired Horton Rd. Legion Dec. 5 and 12 available before Christmas. No Buffet served in Dec. Cost approx. \$25 per per person.

January – Buffet available. Discussion. Party to be held in January. Kevin R will make inquiries/reservation. 3rd Friday preferable if available.

New Business

Indra R - proposed having business type cards made up with club name, meeting dates, web site etc. to be able to hand out at gun shows etc. Dave S. will look into it.

BREAK

Raffle: Puzzle donated by Al R. and Book donated by Daryl K.

No Book raffle.

Show and Tell

Stu E – suggested club members give bios of themselves. – Idea to be discussed. Stu has been selected by the Govt. as one of the veterans to go over to Italy to commemorate the Italian Campaign.

John E – Showed the “American” style of poppy.

Garry M – Talked about relative that was part of the escort for Napoleon into exile and the chess board the relative liberated from Napoleon.

Showed a telescope obtained from his grandmother. Also showed a WWI trio replacement set representing his grandfather.

Daryl K – Bomber Command Bar - Frame of pre. 1936 cap badges - Pistol holster.

Dave S – Talked about the 10 Sikh's that served in the CEF. Informed club of web site for out of print books on CD's. www.archiveCDbooks.ca

Bob Mc. – HMCS Calgary token - German WWI POW camp tokens. - British POW camp token.

Jack D – Article re: Japanese Balloon Bomb found this summer near Lumby, B.C.

Don S – Badges of the Indian Army Cavalry

Al R – Photo album of German RAD (labour force) - German West Wall medal.

Al D – 2 Silver crosses for his Dad. Mother's and Wife's. - One was issued as a George V in error.

Floyd S – Paper medal ribbon bar wrapped in plastic. - WWII sports medal.

Motion to adjourn Tony G Seconded John E Carried.

Like all ships-of-the-line, **HMS Elephant** is not a handy ship, being slow and unresponsive to the helm. Good sailing qualities, however, are secondary to the weight of broadside that she can both deliver and withstand. This is important in a warship that is intended to form the centrepiece of any squadron and possibly act as an admiral's flagship.

Built on the River Hamble in Hampshire, an estuary with a centuries-old shipbuilding industry, HMS Elephant was one of a class of 12 third-rate, 74-gun warships. The class was designed by Sir Thomas Slade, possibly the best naval architect of his time, and most were built by private contractors using standardised plans. HMS Elephant was chosen by Vice-Admiral Nelson to be his squadron flagship at the Battle of Copenhagen (1801), thanks to her shallow draft, which was considered a useful feature when attacking a fleet at anchor. Another Slade-designed ship, HMS Victory, carried the promoted Viscount Nelson to his final victory and death at Trafalgar in 1805.

So this is how I travelled. I was minted in London in 1847, from silver and iron mixture, and had some 230 different clasps made for attachments. Almost 21, 000 originals of my NGS were awarded. My owner, **William Milne** has his name inscribed on my edge.

I was put on a British Warship sailing to Melbourne. There I sat safely in a treasure chest at the Ranch, and after my owner died in 1851, I was willed to his brother Capt. Alexander S. Milne, in Canada. I was again put onto a British Warship and sent half way around the world, and up the St. Lawrence seaway to Hamilton/Ancaster, in Canada West. He was a barrister who kept me in a drawer at home, and upon his death in 1864, willed it to his son, James G. Milne, also a solicitor, who rode horseback out west in search of gold and adventure. James served in the Fenian Raids of 1866 and the Riel Rebellion of 1885. His medals are added to my collection.

When James settled and speculated on lands in Qu'Appelle NWT in 1883, my NGS medal was transported on the new CPR railway, where it resided on *The Milne Farm* for 45 years until 1925. My owner died in 1929, and I was willed to his son Alexander G. Milne, who ran the farm. When the farm was sold, I was packed in the family trunk, and carried on the 1917 Maxwell, across a dusty prairie to Wabamun Lake, west of Edmonton. There I sat for four years, until my owner moved me by a 1932 Buick to Calgary in 1933. I resided in Alexander's downtown apartment for 11 years, until he died in 1943, and his wife gave it to their eldest son, Sgt. Harvey W. Milne, who had been serving the Canadian Army in England, not far from where I was minted. I was stored in his home, in the trunk for 40 years. In 1983, Harvey gave it to his eldest nephew, Garry Milne. Harvey died in Calgary in 2007. Garry had moved it by car to St. Albert, and it remained in his home for 25 years, while he researched my origins. He found detailed naval service records of my original owner, and his naval father at KEW in London. Now I sit proudly displayed for all to see. My ribbon was almost gone, so a shiny new one was attached, but you can still see my original one. I am happy to be on display.

So here I am, mounted into a display case along with some 36 other family war medals - the older ones are as issued, with some of the WW2 medals purchased and made into sets - the originals being passed on to their children. What will they do? Each war medal has a family story, and war service was a big part of their lives. While veterans don't want to talk, the inheritors of these medals want to know their stories. It remains with the present generation to do the research and keep the records for the future.

If I could talk, you would be impressed. 166 years later, and my seafaring Captain's request has been faithfully followed. I am still in the family! How is this possible? Families don't normally keep war medals; they sell them for financial gain; at least most do. Others just don't care. This story is unusual and unique. Future generations must know stories about the owner. **Commander William Milne (B)** has quite an interesting story, told here all too briefly. It's about him wanting to keep the medal in the family. It would appear his last wishes and commands have been fulfilled, as it is proudly displayed in Calgary.

Garry Milne.



Nelson's commands. HMS Agamemnon, Captain, Vanguard, Elephant & Victory.