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The London Antique Arms Fair 2015

A Welcome from the Chairman

A ‘distinguished yet penurious old officer’ and his Sword by Peter Heuschen

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Welcome to the 94th London Antique Arms Fair

A very warm welcome to the 94th London Antique Arms Fair. We have thought long and hard about the Fair and feel the time is now right to move to a one day fair. The amount of good quality arms and armour has dwindled over the years and there are now few exciting collections in private ownership coming on to the market. Gone are the days when you could buy a suit of armour or a pair of cased pistols for a few hundred pounds. We have to face the fact that a good proportion of our business is now done on the internet but, with your support, we at the London Arms Fairs will endeavour to persevere to have on display the cream of the crop of antique arms and armour. We are pleased to welcome back several exhibitors who have not been with us for the last few years.

There has been some speculation in the media of late regarding the legality of ownership of some antique firearms including obsolete calibres. Our news-makers invariably subscribe to the old adage 'never let the truth stand in the way of a good story'. With this in mind I had a meeting recently with officers of the Firearms Licensing Department of the Metropolitan Police and they confirmed what we already knew that, as well as antique firearms, some 400 obsolete calibres also do not need any form of licence. The full list, compiled by the Home Office was published in October 2014, and can be found on the Home Office website. We have the list on show at the London Arms Fair available for anyone to consult, and a representative from the Firearms Department will be on hand to allay anyone’s fears regarding what does and does not require a licence. An updated list, to include some additional obsolete calibres, is currently being prepared by the Home Office. It may be stating the obvious but I feel that the media, our exhibitors and our customers should all be made fully aware of the legality of everything we have on offer at the London Arms Fair today.

This year we are celebrating the second centenary of the Battle of Waterloo and the Duke of Wellington’s rifle is being offered for sale and displayed on John Slough of London’s stand. To commemorate the occasion 10% of its price when sold will be donated to the Arms Fair’s chosen charity Combat Stress.

They will come on in the same old way and we will meet them in the same old way attributed to the Duke of Wellington before the Battle of Waterloo.

John Slough
Chairman
A SCOTTISH HIGHLAND CLAYMORE, circa 1574

Provenance:
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Private collection, Germany

Literature:
Laking, Sir Guy Francis, *A Record of European Armour and Arms*, vol. 2, 1920, pp. 304, fig. 684
A ‘distinguished yet penurious old officer’ and his Sword

by Peter Heuschen

For a collector of edged weapons, there is nothing more rewarding than being able to attribute a sword to its former owner and research his career and therefore bring history to life. Inscriptions and dedications on swords such as this can usually be researched in one of the Imperial German Army Lists (Ranglisten) and once an owner has been identified a regimental history may provide additional information about his life. Even some of the most elaborate swords often cannot be attributed to their former owners and in the case of this weapon it is sheer luck that somewhat richer sources are available.

The former owner of this sword, Friedrich von Heimburg, has his own entry in Wilhelm Werner Kurt von Priesdorff’s collection of short biographies of Prussian Generals (Soldatisches Führertum), which provides invaluable insight into the life of a distinguished senior officer between the German Wars of Unification and World War I. Furthermore, a yearbook which was compiled by former cadets of the Köslin military school after World War II, provides a few more nuggets about his involvement as an educator.

Paul Friedrich August von Heimburg was born in the town of Jever on 18.03.1851 into the cadet branch of an ancient aristocratic family from Lower Saxony in Northern Germany. Tracing their roots back to the 11th Century, the von Heimbursgs provided a constant supply of officers and provincial as well as court officials. During the second half of the 19th Century, the von Heimbursgs contributed two further Generals to the Prussian officer’s corps and both bore the name Friedrich: The brothers Georg Friedrich Heinrich Paul von Heimburg (21.3.1836 – 22.2.1913) and Friedrich Otto Quintus von Heimburg (21.4.1839 – 1.10.1906). However, at the time in question with regard to this sword both had retired and therefore are unlikely to have been the recipients.

Friedrich attended grammar school in Jever and four days after the outbreak of the 1870/71 Franco-Prussian War he joined the Ersatzbataillon of the Infantry Regiment Grand Duke of Saxony (5th Thuringian) Nr. 94 as a volunteer. During the war he saw action at the sieges of Metz and Thionville and the battles of Beaune la Rolande, Le Mans, Ladon, Beaugency-Cravant, Chateau Serqueu, Montoire and St. Jean. He was promoted to Ensign (Portepeefähnrich) in February and to Second Lieutenant in March 1871. His Regimental Commander, Colonel von Hagen, attested Friedrich that he was “(…) a young man of good upbringing, good education and solid character. During battle he conducted himself without fault”.

After the war, Friedrich remained with the 94th Regiment and by 1876 we see him as an adjutant, initially in the 1. and then in
the III. Battalion. However, as the third son of a senior provincial magistrate, Friedrich did not come from a wealthy background and even though the Emperor granted him a monthly stipend, with the Wars of German Unification over there was little opportunity to distinguish himself in the field and climb the career ladder. Nevertheless, he developed into a reliable and versatile soldier with a certain talent for drawing and cartography. Friedrich was appreciated by his fellow officers and superiors who eventually recommended him as an instructor to the cadet corps.

The Prussian cadet corps had been established in 1716 and comprised pupils aged between 10 and 15 and who were spread across an average of eight schools throughout Germany, each with 150 to 240 cadets. These schools acted as feeder schools for the Central Academy in Berlin Groß-Lichterfelde, not too dissimilar to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. The curriculum in the cadet schools focused on the more practical and natural sciences syllabus of the grammar schools of the time and was augmented with Latin, French and English lessons. In addition, cadets received their basic military training.

In 1881, Friedrich was seconded to the cadet school in Potsdam and in the same year he was promoted to First Lieutenant. Three years later he transferred to the cadet school in Kulm (Chełmno, Poland) and in 1885 he was given permission to marry. Friedrich married Cornelia Schaedtler who was born in Sydney, Australia to German emigrants and came from a family which had already married into the von Heimbürg family. They were to have six children and all three sons were to follow family tradition and served as officers in the Army and Navy during both World Wars. Their eldest son was the U-boat commander Heino von Heimbürg.

Friedrich returned to the 94th Regiment in 1887 and two years later he was transferred to the 1. Hannover Infantry Regiment Nr. 74 based in Hannover as Captain and company commander. However in 1889, Friedrich was recalled to Kulm to lead a company of cadets and spent another two years in Pomerania where he would have witnessed the closure of the cadet school in Kulm in 1890 and its relocation to Koslin (Koszalin, Poland). From the school’s yearbook we know that he was valued by the cadets as an appreciative and kind-hearted officer who was very involved and raised funds to adorn the school chapel with new stained glass windows. Around the same time, in 1892, a new school was opened in Karlsruhe and Friedrich was
posted there as one of its first instructors. Not even a year later, in January 1893, Friedrich was given responsibility for a company of the Infantry Regiment von Borcke (4th Pomeranian) Nr. 21, based in Thorn (Torun, Poland) and where he spent four years before being posted with the Infantry Regiment Bremen (1st Hanseatic) Nr. 75 as company commander in Bremen.

With regard to this sword it is Friedrich’s next promotion which is of note. In 1898, he was promoted to the rank of Major and it is highly likely that this sword was a present to commemorate his promotion. The date of the promotion was 10th September yet the inscription on the blade is dated 11th December 1898. Whilst the dates do not match, it is quite conceivable that Friedrich and his brother caught up in the time leading up to Christmas and exchanged presents. In any event, 11th December does not coincide with any of the family’s birthdays or a wedding anniversary and the promotion is most likely to have been the key milestone of that year. In 1900, Friedrich returned to Hannover and transferred to the Fusilier Regiment Field Marshal Prince Albrecht of Prussia (Hanoverian) Nr. 73, where he became the Commander of the II Battalion. His commanding General, Cavalry General von Stuenzner commented: ‘He continues to fulfil his duties in an admirable manner and given his performance he would be a suitable candidate for a regimental commander role. His character traits, his gift to influence and educate his subordinates in an exemplary fashion, his fine, humble mind as well as his military background lead me to strongly recommend this distinguished staff officer as a Commander of a cadet school’.

After twelve years in various Northern German line regiments, Friedrich returned to tutoring and, coinciding with his promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1905, he was appointed as the Commander of the cadet school in Koslin. An inspection in 1908 found that the school ‘(...) is in a very good condition, in particular with regard to the level of teaching. There is a positive atmosphere, an excellent relationship between the officers and the civilian teachers, a happy and healthy spirit among
the cadets so that I have to describe the Commander’s leadership of the school as quite good and strongly recommend that he continues in this position, in particular as this distinguished yet penurious old officer has proven so worthy of this role’. The cadets remembered him as ‘a great man, to whom we had little exposure but whose kindness and warmth had a powerful impact on us’.

Friedrich was relieved from his duties at Koslin in 1909 and became the Commander of the Landwehr (military) district of the South-western German town of Worms. After the outbreak of World War I, Friedrich was appointed Deputy-Commander of the Landwehr district of Karlsruhe and in autumn 1914 he participated in the Battle of the Yser and took on responsibility as Commander of the Reserve-Infantry Regiment Nr. 213. In December 1914, Friedrich was awarded the Iron Cross, II Class and in January 1915 he was promoted to Colonel. The spring and summer of 1915, saw Friedrich as Commander of the PoW Camp in Worms-Pfiffligheim with capacity for 10,000 PoWs and in September of the same year he was appointed Commander of the Landsturm (fencibles) Inspection for the XVIII Army Corps. As the war progressed, Friedrich returned to his peace time command with the Landwehr district of Worms but before the war ended, he was discharged with the rank of Major-General in April 1918. Two years after the end of the war, on 23.07.1920, Friedrich celebrated 50 years of service anniversary. For the next sixteen years he and his wife lived in a large red brick house on the Baltic coast in Travemünde just north of Lübeck and where he led the life of a retired General in the inter-war period until his death on 21.08.1936.

Friedrich clearly was an experienced and distinguished senior officer of the German Empire and the medals he was awarded testify to this. According to the Army List of 1914, he wore the following medals and awards:

- Prussian Order of the Red Eagle 4th Class
- Prussian Order of the Crown 3rd Class
- Prussian Long Service Cross
- Brunswick Knight’s Cross 1st Class of the Order of Henry the Lion
Hessian Order of Merit of the Order of Philip the Magnanimous, Commander 1st Class

Oldenburg Order of Merit of the Order of Duke Peter Friedrich Ludwig, Knight of Honour 2nd Class

Oldenburg Order of Merit, Cross of Honour 3rd Class with Swords

Imperial Japanese Order of the Sacred Treasure (Zuiho-sho)

However, judging by his biography and the repeatedly mentioned desolate state of his finances, it is clear that Friedrich was not a wealthy man and had it not been for his brother’s generosity, he may not have gone to the expense of buying such an ornate sword. As a point of reference, old price lists show that a sword like this would have cost approximately 100 Marks compared to a Major’s monthly pay of less than 500 Marks.

Having learned about the beneficiary what do we know about the donor? Friedrich was the fourth of five brothers and this sword may have been given to him by any of his brothers as all were still alive in 1898. However, the youngest brother, Heino Karl Elmar, a retired Lieutenant had emigrated to the US some time before 1885. The other brothers were local government officials and one was a landowner and farmer and potentially all of them were better off than an Army Major. However, unfortunately it has been impossible to identify one of them as the donor of this sword.

Friedrich would have started his military career with the old Prussian pattern infantry officer’s sword, which is similar to 1796 Pattern British Infantry Officer’s sword. However von Heimburg sword is the successor pattern, often referred to as ‘Infanterie Offiziersdegen 1889 – IOD89’.

This pattern is widely known to collectors around the world and does not need further introduction; however, the von Heimburg sword stands out due to its ornate features.

The gilded brass hilt is heavily chiselled throughout with great attention to detail. The pommel cap features an oak-leaf pattern as does the ferrule and the knuckle-bow features a similar design. The pommel is decorated with a raised motif of crossed swords and flags flanking a raised eagle and military trophies. The folding hand guard features an Imperial eagle with sceptre and sword and the “WR11” cipher for Wilhelmus Rex II, or, as he is better known, Kaiser Wilhelm II. The inside of the folding guard is decorated with a chiselled floral design. Somewhat unusually, this sword features a reverse folding guard which would allow for the hilt to fold flat against the body without scraping the uniform. Sitting underneath the ferrule are remnants of a black and white leather finger loop. The black/dark brown Bakelite grip shows virtually no surface wear with no cracks or chips and no damage to the double-twisted wire wrap. The grip is adorned with an enamelled guard star, a miniature of the star of Order of the Black Eagle, which requires some explanation.

As of the late 1890s officers of the Guard Regiments were permitted to fix the guard star to their swords instead of the “WR11” cipher which is usually found on this pattern. Friedrich never served in any of the Guard Regiments and it is safe to assume that when the sword was given to him it featured the regular “WR11” emblem. The tiny holes receiving the cipher are still visible. However, according to the Highest Cabinet Order (Allerhöchste Kabinets Orde - AKO) of 1st May 1848, Generals wore a guard star on their helmets and often this custom was extended to affixing...
the start of the sword grip as well. Therefore, it may well be that Friedrich exchanged the cipher for the enamelled guard star upon his promotion to Major-General in April 1918. Given all we know about Friedrich this seems a somewhat vain gesture but might also be interpreted as professional pride.

The straight, double-fullered blade is made from Damascus steel in the so-called “maiden hair” pattern and is signed on the gilded obverse ricasso with WEYERSBERG, KIRSCHBAUM & CO SOLINGEN in three lines. Weyersberg, Kirschbaum & Co was one of the foremost sword makers in Solingen and enjoyed a reputation for high quality blades far beyond the German Empire. The spine is signed WILH. WELHAUSEN, HANNOVER which indicates that the sword was bought at the shop of Wilhelm Welhausen, a tailor and outfitter with premises in Hannover, Cassel and Berlin and who had been in business since 1873. The heavily gilded and blued blade features on the obverse a three-ribbon inscription reading ‘M.l. Bruder – Friedrich – v. Heimburg’ (To my dear brother Friedrich v. Heimburg) in raised gothic letters and which is flanked by floral and martail etchings. The reverse bears the dedication ‘Hannover d. 11. November 1898’ (Hannover the 11th November 1898). The blade is in wonderful condition only showing light surface wear and speckling with runner marks to the edges of the ricasso.

The blade is complete with a brown leather buffer protecting the hilt from scratches through the scabbard and preventing moisture from entering the scabbard and damaging the blade. The steel scabbard with two suspension bands and rings is complete with two throat retaining screws. Unlike other officers and to the relief of the modern collector, Friedrich refrained from sharpening the blade when World War I broke out and today the sword is a very tangible and well preserved piece of history. Whilst it remains unlikely that the donor will be identified amongst Friedrich’s brothers further research into his career could be done. In general, many of the regimental histories are somewhat solemn and superficial. Nevertheless, a study of the histories of the regiments in which Friedrich served may reveal more information about him, for example, on which occasion or for which service he received a Japanese medal. Equally, further research into the histories of the cadet schools and the surviving accounts of the Worms PoW camp may contribute to what we know about Friedrich von Heimburg.
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Table plan for the fair
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COLLECTING ON A BUDGET

Ephemera - Collecting on a budget
by F Wilkinson

For many years the collecting of arms and armour was very much a minority taste but from the 1950s it began to expand, possibly influenced by the influx of US troops during World War II. For the pre-war collector sources of information were very limited and reference books were either very academic or less than well researched. As interest increased so did the amount of available, reliable information and dealers and more collectors began to appreciate the finer points of the subject. During this period the current market was well supplied with material and it was not uncommon to find antique shops with umbrella-stands filled with swords at, what are now, ridiculous prices. In London Christie’s and Sotheby’s, two of the main auction houses, were each holding up to nine arms and armour sales a year and there were also other smaller rooms. Trade was further stimulated by a keen overseas and American market and inevitably as demand increased so did competition and prices rose. Antique magazines included relevant articles further stimulating demand and the old days when bayonets were a few shillings a time and bundles of Asiatic weapons for a few pounds began to disappear.

Dedicated bodies such as the Arms and Armour Society, formed in 1951, flourished but probably the biggest stimulation came about in 1968 when a long established US feature came to Britain. The first London Antique Arms Fair was held in Westminster and proved to be such a success that similar fairs soon became an established feature of the trade and were repeated in towns across the country. At first the material displayed at these fairs was limited to arms and armour but soon militaria, generally less expensive, was included. Growing interest and increased demand meant that, inevitably, prices rose even faster, gradually reducing areas of collecting available to those with only limited funds. Over the past few years as the number of people unable to collect has increased so the number of newcomers to the fascinating field of arms and armour has sadly diminished. Although it may now be difficult to collect actual objects there are still fields that offer the opportunity to

In the mid 19th century there was a fear that France planned to make war. This prompted a rush to create volunteer regiments and this notice is typical of hundreds of such attempts.
COLLECTING ON A BUDGET

An unusual booklet

Early guide book for the Tower of London

Mid 19th century romanticised picture of a highwayman typical of so much illustrative art of the period.

Collect and study associated material at reasonable prices. The items may lack the glamour, skill and craftsmanship of weapons and armour but nevertheless they can stimulate interest. Such pieces are usually grouped together under the generic titles of militaria and ephemera.

The title Militaria covers literally any object connected with armed forces, such as uniform, badges and equipment and these are still fields which offer some pieces at reasonable prices and have long been popular areas of collecting. Medals, in particular, are well served with a number of well respected dealers and auction houses that mount regular sales. Prices of medals issued for certain campaigns and battles and those named to well known characters are very expensive but there are many other types available at affordable prices. Reference sources are plentiful, with opportunities for research readily to hand. The centenary of World War I has stimulated much interest in that period and consequently prices of medals and associated material have risen considerably, and a similar increase will surely arise when the celebration of some World War II events occurs.

Collectors of uniform and equipment are well catered for and both fields have a number of established societies and publications to help the collector identify value and acquire material. Today the web has made readily available information that only a few years ago was difficult to access. Badges and insignia were at one time the collecting province of small boys but time and growing demand has pushed up prices and unusual examples are now very expensive. The market was not helped by the appearance of large numbers of re-strikes which were, in effect, good quality reproductions. Fortunately there are several reliable reference books on the market and buying from established dealers and auctions is a wise move. German Third Reich material has been copied for so many films and TV that in some cases items are sold ‘as seen’ meaning that the vendor cannot guarantee the authenticity of the item, emphasising, yet again, the virtue of purchasing from established dealers and obtaining a full receipt.

From a set of German sales cards illustrating soldiers through the ages
Ephemera may be loosely defined as ‘paper-based’ and items ‘not primarily intended to survive’ and includes letters, pamphlets, notices, bills, illustrations, posters, programs, official notices, catalogues, maps, adverts, postcards and official forms - in fact almost anything written or printed. Armies have thrived on bureaucracy and instruction booklets, passes and other official forms and similar items have survived and are not rare. Examples may be found at boot and jumble sales and fairs, often at quite reasonable prices since they are sometimes valued as little more than waste paper. Ephemera is less well served than other fields with published material as the material is so diverse. References can be few and far between and pricing of objects is much less precise, although a search on such websites as eBay may provide some guidance. Sadly since so much of the material is composed of paper or card it is very vulnerable to age, use and wear. Inevitably some pieces will be in a condition that is less than pristine and it is a personal choice as to whether condition or rarity is the more important. A very rough working rule is that if the item is legible then it is worth considering but as with all collecting condition, quality and rarity are prime considerations.

During the 1940s a German invasion was anticipated and numerous booklets on weapons were produced. Illustrations and pictures constitute a large group and includes water colours and prints ranging from those extracted from special publications to single pages taken from printed volumes, some dating to the 17th century. Fortunately there are several reference books which may enable identification. Postcards are another group with strong military connections ranging from regimental badges to pictures of everyday life in the army. A most prolific publisher of coloured postcards was the
firm of Raphael Tuck dating back to 1899 and another was Gale and Polden of Aldershot who rather specialised in military topics from 1908-09. World War I is well served with numerous, often quite sentimental, cards. Trench maps are another feature of the period but some care is needed since there have been a number of reproduction issues. Cards issued with packets of cigarettes from the late 19th century frequently feature military topics and were usually issued in sets of 50. Early sets are expensive but many later examples will be found at reasonable prices and loose sets not stuck into supplied albums are generally preferred by collectors.

During the 1940s when a German invasion of Britain was expected, Home Guard units were formed. This situation spurred a number of publishers to issue booklets on uniforms, ranks and insignia as well as those designed to explain and teach the use of various weapons. They were produced cheaply and printed in quantity but the number still on the market is slowly diminishing. Many adverts for drinks, clothing and special occasions have often...
COLLECTING ON A BUDGET

Featured military themes or weapons and are worth looking for, as are posters exhorting support for military events. Seaside souvenirs in the form of small white china pieces were fashioned in the shape of tanks, machine guns, helmets and various other military objects. Frequently decorated with gold painted lines, these were a specialty product of the firm of W. Hugo's of Stoke-on-Trent but there were other firms in the market.

War has been defined as long periods of boredom interspersed with brief periods of fear. Troops during World War I often spent relatively calm periods in the trenches. Many were craftsmen in civilian life and, to fill the idle hours, they took the debris of battle such as empty cartridge cases and moulded them into small decorative items such ash trays or vases. Such pieces are collectively known as trench art and whilst not to everybody's taste they do have some appeal.

Within the limits of this brief article it has not been possible to do more than to suggest some of the more obvious 'budget' fields of collecting in the hope that it will encourage the study and preservation of items that may be mundane but are still of historical value.

Collecting, sources and references

The following list comprises a very small collection of titles and the reader is recommended to Collecting Military Antiques by F. Wilkinson London 1976 for a much more comprehensive listing. To keep up to date it is well worth viewing the catalogues issued periodically by specialist book seller Ken Trotman Books, PO Box 505, Huntingdon, PB29 2XW. The web also offers the chance to keep in touch with new books.

The web also offers the chance to check on new publications.

The Crowood Press, The Stable Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Wiltshire NSN8 2HR include among their extensive listing a number of books on collecting military items

Lord F.A. Civil War Collectors’ Encyclopaedia Harrisburg 1965

Mollo A. Army Uniforms of World War II London 1973

Cookley P. Civilian Life in World War II Stroud 2007

Kipling A. Head-dress Badges of the British Army 2 vols London 1980

Army Museums Ogilby Trust Index to British Military Costume Prints 1500-1914 London 1972

Gordon J British Battles and Medals London 1979

Societies

The web will supply details of national and local groups such as the Arms and Armour Society, Historical Breech Loading Association, Military Medal Collectors and it is usually sufficient to feed in the object e.g. head-dress to find many possible sources.

Sources

Many auction rooms now include militaria and ephemera and the two prime rooms are Walls and Walls at Lewes and Bosleys of Marlow but Bonhams and Thomas Del Mar sales regularly include items. There are also computer software programs that can be set to search the web for such sales.

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THE LONDON ANTIQUE ARMS FAIR GUIDE

From Klingenthal to Waterloo - The French Cavalry Sabre

by Paul Wilcock

For the sword collector, the French cavalry sword has long been a popular acquisition, either in its own right or to act as a comparator to a collection of British edged weapons. The story of the production and supply of these weapons to the French cavalry, and indeed the military in general, reflects a concern for technological superiority, and a level of quality control which was rare at the end of the 18th Century. The British light and heavy cavalry models are much in evidence during this year, the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, however, controversial as it may be, the sabre of choice when looting the fallen enemy was often the French cavalry sabre.

This anniversary provides a unique opportunity to examine the manufacture of these enigmatic swords and their supply to the French mounted forces that became the scourge of Europe for over twenty years.

SWORD PRODUCTION

Solingen had, for many years, been a central region for the manufacture of blades and, as with most arms manufacturers, they were not particularly concerned with the identity of the end user. In France many sword blades were imported from the long established Solingen manufacturers. Louis XV, in an attempt to curtail this practice, established a manufacturing base in Alsace. The first Entrepreneur, effectively the Commercial Director, Jean-Philippe Anthes, received letters of patent in 1730 and began manufacturing two years later. This was the beginning of the Klingenthal dynasty from where some of the world’s finest blades would emerge. On the northern borders of France, Klingenthal (Klingen = blades, Thal = Valley) was well placed for rich resources of iron ore, wood, water, and close enough to attract 25 experienced workers from Solingen to establish the manufacturing base. To date, Solingen’s superiority had gone unchallenged. There are numerous examples of swords made in Solingen for military officers throughout Europe and there were clearly some manufacturers such as Kirschbaum, Schmelbusch and Hoppe who had become favoured contractors in France. This reputation stretched to England as well.

A batch of blades purchased from Solingen was used to produce an initial group of 24 swords for the British 10th Hussars purchased on the instructions of the Prince Regent and presented by him to the officers in the regiment. However, there was a significant difference in the system of production between France and Britain at the time. In Britain, blades and swords were supplied entirely by private contractors, often cost driven and sometimes with little quality control. Accounts from the Board of Ordnance in the 1780s relate competitive presentations from makers such as Woolley, Cullum, Gill and the imported of Solingen blades, J.J.Runkel. Under the French system, Klingenthal held the status of being a government operated facility with highly developed quality controls. Overseen by an Entrepreneur, he had complete financial responsibility for managing the government contract. Having been awarded the contract, it was his responsibility to source raw materials, finance production, employ expertise, pay the staff and subsequently supply the orders back to the government, usually at around a 20% profit. The critical difference was the level of quality control. While the Entrepreneur may have been the financier, the Director and Controllers were usually military personnel often from the Artillery. The Director was supported by other officers, all of whom were responsible to the military authorities. The tension between the Entrepreneur and the military staff ensured a healthy transparency and sufficient mutual trust (or distrust!) to ensure the highest quality standards were maintained.

The earliest swords produced at Klingenthal were inscribed from the royal manufactory at Alsace rather than Klingenthal. During the latter part of the monarchy ‘Klingenthal’ begins to appear on the inscriptions and there follows a series of changes depending on date and political circumstances. Klingenthal produced both fully constructed swords but also blades for assembly into hilts at the manufactory at Versailles. There were however, in the new egalitarian regime, opportunities for other independent artisans, particularly during the revolution. Numerous examples exist of blades with Klingenthal inscriptions mounted in hilts made by private contractors.

The Revolutionary Army was expanded to meet the challenges both of the threat of invasion of France’s borders and significant internal strife, particularly in the Vendee and around Toulon, as well as to control the grain riots in 1792. As a result, arms production came under significant strain. Klingenthal could barely meet demand, and, while continuing to impose strict quality controls, between 1792 and 1797 a small number of sword blades carry no inscription and only
the poinçons ‘AP’ and the ‘faiseau de fletue’. These swords were produced by private contractors and are stamped with these marks as quality control acceptance marks. The names of the smaller manufacturers, such as Dumont and Quantin, often appear stamped on the guard.

On 1st February 1801, Couaux Freres were granted a ‘Bail d’Entreprise’ for a period of nine years to be the Entrepreneurs at Klingenthal. This began a family dynasty that was to last until 1862. The agreement was renewed on 24th April 1810 at which point the inscriptions on the back edges of the blades were to carry the month and year of manufacture. The earliest known examples seen on ANX light cavalry sabres date from May 1810 (Fig 1).

During the Empire, Klingenthal was the principal manufacturer of swords and as a result these are seen most frequently in collections. The manufactory produced a flow of new and replacement swords with a range of artisans. These included refiners to deal with the iron ore; forgers, temperers; polishers and sharpeners for the blades along with three specialist engravers. This was almost certainly for the elaborate decoration on some of the officer’s blades rather than the inscriptions which were carried out in the community. There were also of course leather workers and carpenters as well as various other skilled craftsmen. At its height Klingenthal is estimated to have had around 600 employees.

France’s expansion into Europe had a number of effects on its army. The first was significant growth as alliances were formed such as the Confederation of the Rhine in 1806. It also meant that, particularly as a result of its incursion into Prussia, the steel mills came under French control. Despite this, sword production was still primarily taking place in France. Klingenthal’s production figures for cavalry sabres show an increase in 1806 followed by a slight fall in 1807. The zenith of production came as a result of the campaign in Russia where huge quantities of equipment were lost. On 23rd February 1813 Napoleon reorganised his army and ordered vast quantities of swords. Klingenthal production of cavalry swords more than doubled from a figure of 32,332 in 1811 to a massive 70,810 in 1813. Napoleon’s abdication in March 1814 meant that in practice some of these swords never reached their nominated destinations. While significant production continued in 1814 (51,843), it fell dramatically in 1815 and continued to fall during the subsequent period of Allied occupation.

Regardless of the decline in production, there are examples of swords from Klingenthal produced in 1815 marked during the First Restoration (Royale) and the 100 Days (Imperial). The example at (Fig 2) illustrates a change in poinçon recorded on 5th May 1815 but a blade inscribed April 1815 with Imperial prefix. This is an excellent representation of the production and etching of a batch of blades within a very limited timeframe. Political change was reflected in the inscriptions and the manufacturers were not slow in their changes of allegiance.

THE END USER - THE CAVALRY

Perhaps the most romantic, enigmatic and dashing figure in the history of armies throughout the world is the cavalryman. It was every boy’s dream to charge on horseback from the knights in armour to the Russian Steppes and the vast façade of the massed ranks of cavalry during the Napoleonic Wars. In the context of most armies the cavalry was seen as the arm of service to which gentlemen allied themselves; the artillery was for the technician, the infantry for the cannon fodder but the cavalry for those who sought adventure and glory. General Antoine Lasalles, one of Napoleon’s most outrageous and brave cavalry commanders, was once said to have exclaimed that “Any hussar who is not dead by the age of 30 is a blackguard!” He died aged 34 at the Battle of Wagram. There are conflicting accounts of the circumstances from leading a cavalry charge to being hit by a bullet at the end of the engagement. It is no surprise that for his film ‘The Duellists’ Ridley Scott chose hussar officers to play the main protagonists.

The cavalry in the last days of royalist France was constituted into heavy and light units. There were 26 regiments of heavy cavalry including the two carabiniers, 18 regiments of dragoons, 12 chasseurs a cheval and six of hussars. The Revolution had caused a huge dilution of the officer corps with those not being removed from office or executed, becoming emigrés. Bonaparte himself was arrested twice and even among close compatriots at the Ecole Militaire there were difficult choices to be made. A sword owned by Bonaparte, given to him as a gift by Gabriel Desmazis in 1786, can be seen in the War Gallery at the Royal Armoursies in Leeds. Both Desmazis and his brother Alexandre left France in 1792 to join the royalist forces abroad, only returning many years later to serve in Napoleon’s Imperial Court.

For those who survived the revolution and forged a career as senior officers, the choice of sword to be carried was, at least unofficially, far less prescriptive. As with British officers of the day, the style of swords carried by French officers was influenced by personal style and taste, and by many foreign campaigns, not least incursions into North Africa. One particularly popular style of sabre for senior officers emanated from the campaigns in Egypt and led to the adoption of the scimitar bladed ‘mameluke’ style sword as the latest fashion accessory. There are many examples of these swords which were worn by officers in the British as well

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2 Robson B. (2011) ‘Swords of the British Army’
3 The precise figures are referenced in Christian Blondieau’s work ‘Sabres Francais 1680-1814’. The exact constitution varied but French records indicate that this figure was accurate certainly at the time of the beginning of the Revolution
4 IX.908 see Wilcock P.T., ‘Napoleon’s First Sword’ Arms and Armour Vol 5 No 2
The Couflaux brothers received their first baild enterprise in February 1801 for a period of nine years. It was 8 Blondieau C. 'Sabres Francais 1680-1814' pp. 233-250
7 Sold at the Ornait Auction Housein Paris 10th June 2007
8 Blondieau C. Sabres Francais 1680-1814' pp. 233-250
9 The Couflaux brothers received their first baild enterprise in February 1801 for a period of nine years. It was renewed in April 1810 for a further twelve years which was when the dates were to be included on the back edge of their blades. (Aries XXX, 1990)
10 Blondieau C. Sabres Francais 1680-1814' p. 260 One of the finest examples can be seen illustrated in this volume. The blade is gilded and carries the 'Lanceau de l'Art eur reflecting the revolutionary heritage. The inscription 'Manufacture du Klingenthal' and 'Couflaux Freres' indicates the importance of the Klingenthal enterprise at the time
11 The Treaties of Luneville (Austria, February 1801), Paris (Russia, October 1801), and Amiens, in March 1802 had established a temporary cessation of hostilities but they were fragile at best. The Third Coalition included England, Russia, Austria, Naples and Sweden and was signed on 8th August 1805
12 This sword was discovered in 2005 in the Regimental Museum of the Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire in York. It was captured at Waterloo by Lt. Edward Trevor of the Royal Artillery and eventually found its way to the museum through family connections

as French armies, the British examples receiving excellent treatment by Dellar. These swords are often unmarked and can have beautiful watered ‘damascus’ steel blades. Occasionally there are also cabalistic inscriptions though these were not unique to swords from this region and are also found on some Solingen blades. The use of cabalistic mystical characters is seen on French swords from early in the 18th Century however the meaning remains unclear. This type of inscription is found on blades throughout the world and the tacit assumption is that they are intended to afford a degree of supernatural protection to the user.

Portraits of French generals such as Murat and Lasalles often feature swords in the ‘mameluke’ style. However the most famous is probably the one carried by Napoleon at Marengo claimed to have been made as a result of him seeing this style of blade during the campaign in Egypt which sold in June 2007 for 4.8 million euros.

On December 24th 1799 Napoleon was appointed First Consul. The creation of the Consular Guard provided the opportunity for an elite force to be created. Members were to be selected on age and experience as well as being able to read and write. Not surprisingly their equipment was also to be of the highest quality. The newly formed Horse Grenadiers carried a brass hilted sabre bearing a grenade in the centre. Infantry officers carried a curved bladed sabre with a single knucklebow and a blade engraved ‘Gardes des Consuls’. The opportunity for the newly appointed entrepreneurs at Klingenthal, Couflaux Freres to make their mark was not missed. In his book ‘Sabres Francais 1680-1814’ Christian Blondieau illustrates several examples of wonderfully decorated blades were carried by senior officers, bearing the legend ‘Gardes des Consuls’ and ‘Grenadiers a Cheval’.

In December 1804 Napoleon became Emperor and the period of Imperial expansion began. By the following year he had also become King of Italy and the stage was set for the next ten years of conflict by the formation of the Third Coalition. If the Consular period reflected more elaborate tastes in swords the Empire was sheer extravagance. During this period some of the finest and most attractive sabres were commissioned and carried. In 1804 the rank of Marshal of France was reinstated with elaborate uniforms and swords to match. Illustrated is an example of a sword (or glaive) captured at Waterloo. This is a rare example of a design issued in Year 6 of the revolutionary calendar (1798) to Generals en Chef and was probably carried by one of Napoleon’s Corps Commanders at Waterloo.

The rank and file troops of the line regiments were equipped with swords befitting their function. The hussars utilised light curved slashing blades, the heavy cavalry were equipped with long straight blades designed for thrusting. Other mounted troops during this period included the artillery and the Marechaussee. The Marechaussee were originally a military force of police responsible to the royal court for maintaining safety on the highways. During the Revolution they were renamed the Gendarmerie but with their functions unchanged. The example illustrated is of the model 1783 (Fig 4). This has fine engraving and shows the intertwined ‘L’ as well as the other royal decoration. (Fig 5) Scabbards were leather with brass fittings. The hilt is brass with the coquille shell guard, and as with the others they have a tightly bound copper wire grip.

Fig 3
There were many sabres for cavalry that remained in service from the monarchy through the revolutionary period and into the Waterloo campaign. In the current consumer culture it is often easy to forget that 200 years ago items of such value as a sword would rarely be disposed of for simply cosmetic or regulatory reasons. The sabre for heavy cavalry was developed from a model in 1779, and revised in 1783. The illustrated example has a flat unfullered blade and a poinçon dating it to 1792-4. The guard is of the same design and is brass plate; however, the fleur de lys has been mutilated and the centre column chiselled to redesign it as a faisau de licteur. (Fig 6) Having the right emblem on a sword during this period in France might be a life and death issue for a soldier, even before he reached the battlefield! The sword carries no inscription tying it to a manufacturer though it has poinçons indicating production at Klingenthal. The pattern became known as the year AN IV and was produced with both fullered and flat blades. (Fig 7)

The regiments of Chasseurs a Cheval were equipped with a new sabre model 1790. This had a heavy single fullered curved blade with a wide ricasso. The handle was wire bound leather on a squared wooden grip making it much easier to control. The guard consisted of a main brass plate with plate bars providing protection to the hand on two sides with a diagonally connecting bar. The pommelet to fit the grip is squared. This pattern is particularly interesting because it dates from a period during the revolution where raw metals were scarce. As a result of the lack of some of the minerals for the production of brass such as tin and zinc, the scabbard fittings are sometimes found crafted in steel rather than brass. It is also noticeable that the brass of the hilt is ‘rose’ or slightly pink in hue, indicating a higher than normal copper content. The AN IV sabre illustrated at (Fig 10) reflects the same characteristics and the poinçons on this sword also indicate a date of manufacture from the early 1790’s.

For the hussars the pattern of sabre changed little. The original model in 1776 provided them with a single edged curved
By 1795 the revised model ANIV had been universally issued with only minor variations and remained the weapon of choice for the hussars throughout the Napoleonic Wars despite the issue of a further replacement for light cavalry in the early 1800’s. The ANIV pattern has a single knucklebow and a curved single edged blade. The standard ANIV model was issued in a wooden scabbard with brass fittings covering the top and bottom thirds of the scabbard. The example at (Fig 10) was manufactured at Klingenthal and carries an inscription on the back edge of the blade and a well-defined poinçon on the guard for Francois Bisch dating it between 1792 and 1798. A particular point of interest is that this also has steel rather than brass fittings.

The guard carries not only the poinçon of the cockerel but an independent manufacturer’s name ‘Quantin’ who was a private manufacturer in Paris around 1790. (Fig 12) The colour is again a deeper copper indicative of mineral shortages. The blade carries not only the revolutionary inscriptions but the revolutionary poinçons of the ‘faisceau de licteur’ and the mark for manufacture at Klingenthal in the early 1790’s. A fascinating aspect of this sabre is the decoration on the scabbard. This is an etched design in an Arabic style with gilt/brass wire inlay. This may reflect the influence of the Egyptian Campaign (1798-1801), and may even indicate a sword carried during the campaign. (Fig 11)

Officers in walking out dress usually carried épées however the ‘Sabre de Petit Tenue’ (Fig 13) was also popular. The example illustrated has a blade made at Klingenthal but the brass guard carries the cockerel poinçon and the stamp of the Paris manufacturer ‘Dumont’ working during the years 1790 to 1804.

This particular sword was the subject of an examination by the Centre for Precision Technology at the University of Huddersfield. The use of advanced surface metrology has enabled highly detailed examination of the poinçons. This in turn has enabled comparison with other examples of the same poinçons to such a degree as to identify specific punches used by the individual artisans. The blade manufactured at Klingenthal carries the ‘faisceau de licteur’ independent inspection mark. The images illustrated utilise high level surface metrology to analyse the marks in fine detail. As a result, even different stamps used on different blades can now be identified and referenced against a database of proof marks. This facility is particularly useful in identifying reproductions. (Figs 14 & 15)

More recently work has taken place scanning sword blades and inscriptions that have been almost totally erased from the surface of the blade. Using techniques and equipment such as the Taylor Hobson Form Talysurf PGI with a Y stage and the Nikon LK CMM with a LCTEDx laser stripe, there has been a considerable degree of success in identifying both owners, manufacturers and presentation inscriptions. This is an example of utilising the most advanced scientific techniques to enable museums and collectors to gain a greater knowledge of artefacts in their possession.

In year ANIX a universal model of sabre for light cavalry was issued often referred to as ‘A La Chasseur’. It had a curved single edged blade with a brass hilt and two...
secondary guard bars. The grip was leather covered wood and the troopers version carried an olive shaped stud to ensure the grip remained firm on the tang. The scabbard is of iron and is the second pattern (see Fig 1 earlier). The initial design was of a very thin gauge iron with flat ring bands. It was seen as hopelessly inadequate for campaign use and was quickly changed. This model of scabbard was retained until the changes made after 1816 when it was replaced by a steel version without the wooden liner. The principal difference between the ANX and ANXI was the scabbard and the differences in the sword itself were minimal. The only noticeable change is that the outer branch of the guard bar on the ANX stops slightly short of the pommel whereas on the ANXI it runs into it.

Throughout the Empire and particularly at Waterloo, the heavy cavalry gained a reputation for high impact! The carabiniers and cuirassiers became the scourge of their European foes. The carabiniers were armed with straight bladed swords with a copper basket style guard carrying a flaming grenade. The cuirassiers were armed with the model ANIX heavy cavalry sabre which went through a series of changes until its final metamorphosis in ANXIII (1804/5). These swords were developed as a common weapon both for cuirassiers and dragoons. The main, indeed only difference, being that the dragoons carried leather scabbards with brass fittings.

The pictures illustrated represent all three patterns of sword blades and the variations in scabbards. The earliest models issued had a flat unfullered blade ending in what is termed a ‘hatchet’ point. (Fig 16) These were found to be less effective and there was a preference for the stronger blades with double fullers. The second example is the double fullered blade measuring 970mm still retaining the hatchet point (Fig 17) and the final example is an identical blade but with a spear point. (Fig 18) There were however unusual variations. One example exists in a private UK collection which appears to be an ANXIII hilt mounted with a straight single fullered ANIV dragoon blade. The poincon on this blade is interesting because it is a previously unidentified mark of one of the inspectors at Klingenthal. While he and his mark are recorded, this is the only known extant example on a blade.

The scabbards illustrated represent all three patterns. The first pattern is illustrated above (Fig 16). This was manufactured in 95mm iron with a wooden lining and like those created for light cavalry was simply insufficiently robust for campaign. These are now incredibly scarce. It was replaced by a much more heavy duty version which was now monstrously heavy, made of 2.5mm thick iron and weighing only marginally less than the sword itself. This too had a wooden lining. There was also a leather and brass scabbard issued for the dragoons. These were obviously much lighter being of leather and meant the whole piece of equipment was more portable however few original examples of these still exist. The final scabbard illustrated in (Fig 18) is what

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16 In a review of the cavalry in 1803 General Kellerman commented upon the poor quality of the swords being carried by the heavy cavalry regiments.
the French describe as the model 1816. In practice however it is highly unlikely that these were produced at such a time of strife. Research into the poisons on the scabbard rings of a number of these indicates that in practice they may well have been produced between 1820 and as late as 1840.

The swords were themselves controversial. Cotty in his ‘Mémoire sur la Fabrication des Armes de Guerre Portatives’ discusses the problems with the sword at length. He complains that while it is useful in thrusting it is poor at delivering other blows. He argues that the cuirassiers claim that its principal issue of instability is caused as a result of the weight of the hilt causing the sword to turn in the hand; however Cotty dismisses this pointing out that “the sword is not in effeminate hands but our cuirassiers...have vigorous arms”. Cotty concludes that it is the grip which is not sufficiently well fastened to the tang that caused the sword to be unstable. This is highly unlikely. Even today it is rare to find ANXIII sabres with loose grips. The possibilities may have either been that the early grips were made of poor quality wood and had deteriorated, but more likely that unless a cut is delivered with great skill and accuracy with a straight bladed sword it simply bounces away or glances off. Indeed later in 1830 General De Brack (previously a cavalry commander in the Grand Armee) recognised the issues posed by trying to cut with a straight thin blade. Controversial as they were, they remained popular with the heavy cavalry. Blades were still being manufactured at Klingenthal as late as 1835 despite there already being two other authorised patterns in service and an example was recorded being made at Chatellerault at late as 1844. The reason is unclear. Perhaps it was to re-supply units who still carried them; or perhaps Colonel’s simply preferred them.

The other controversial issue which has caused a great deal of debate both in the USA and Europe regarding these swords is the sword’s point. French military historians describe the spear point as ‘modifie 1816’. There is now however some evidence to suggest that many of these sabres were field sharpened to a spear point. There is no definitive record at Klingenthal whether new blades were altered or were, by the late Empire being produced with spear points. Several examined over many years including some in both private and museum collections indicate that they were already spear pointed when they fell into British hands prior to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. This would make sense. There are records of a Comet Smithies of the Life Guards being ordered to have his British 1796 pattern heavy cavalry hatchet pointed sabre ground to a spear point. There was every possibility that the French were also finding penetration with a hatchet point problematic and field alterations were being made.

The advent of the Empire brought about the birth of the Imperial Guard. The elite troops were intended as an exemplar to the rest of the army and as a result received the first and best of the equipment available. Their swords were designed under the watchful eye of Nicholas Noel Boutet, one of the most famous armourers of the period working at Versailles. Boutet produced the most magnificent weapons both under contract, as well as individual pieces to order for the Emperor. The Grenadiers a Cheval carried sabres similar to their Consular predecessors. The light cavalry, Chasseurs a Cheval carried a single edged curved sabre with a single knucklebow guard and brass scabbard. The same swords were issued to the Lancers of the Guard, when they were formed in 1807.

The Chasseurs a Cheval of the Imperial Guard were nicknamed ‘the Emperors Spoiled Children’ and perhaps more appropriately (at least in their eyes) ‘The Invincibles’. The regiment was originally raised in December 1799 with four squadrons. The sabre illustrated (Fig 19) is in a second pattern trooper’s scabbard though the poisons and inscription from Klingenthal date the blade to 1809. They.
THE FRENCH CAVALRY SABRE

were assembled at Versailles and the stamp for that armoury can be seen on the quillon along with that of the Reviseur J. Cazamajou. The scabbard is constructed of brass with a wood lining and leather covered panels. Interestingly the corrosion on the blade can be seen beneath where the panel rests on the blade. This sabre is also illustrated in Blondieu’s Sabres Français 1680-1814 and originated from the famous Hutin Collection. Dr Yvan Hutin was one of France’s premier collectors and experts on French swords.

The heavy cavalry, Grenadiers a Cheval of the Imperial Guard were nicknamed among other things, ‘The Big Heels’ and ‘The Gods’. The sword illustrated is a trooper’s sabre of the second type (Fig 20) the first having a scabbard with a single panel with two reinforcing straps. The poincons and inscription also date this sword to 1809. The brass guard is wonderfully crafted with a grenade in the centre of the Boutet designed hilt. The blade curves slightly and has a single wide fuller. In both the Chasseurs and Grenadiers the blade is slightly thinner than expected however the balance was regarded as being excellent. The guard also carries the poincon of Cazamajou and the stamp confirming its construction at Versailles.

CONCLUSION

In the year of the ‘Waterloo 200’ anniversary, when doubtless there will be an increase in ‘swords from Waterloo’ on the market there must sound a cautionary note. For some collectors the precise historical authenticity of a sword may not matter; however for others, it will be a critical factor in whether to make a purchase. This is, (apologies for the pun), a double edged sword.

For the modern collector of French swords there are dangers in being too prescriptive regarding pattern and precise dimensions. It is now possible to measure in nanometres (one millionth of a millimetre!), whereas in 1800 this was unimaginable. While there were regulations setting out the requirements for particular patterns, in reality the availability of core materials often had a large part to play. Brass hilts are a good example. As already observed, in France, particularly during the revolutionary period, there was great fluctuation in the availability of base metals for the production of brass. As a result for example with shortages of zinc, hilts may vary in hue from a hard yellow to a deep copper colour with variations even in separate parts of a guard. So, the collector must understand that parts were reused, commodities were sometimes in short supply and the nature of supply and demand occasionally meant that absolute standards were on rare occasions not met.

Conversely at the higher end of the market, new technologies such as surface scanning and x-ray fluorescence (XRF) mean that reproductions and worse still forgeries are easier to identify. In an article by this author in 2008 these techniques were at best in their infancy. Now they are well developed and increasingly accessible at reasonable cost. None of this however negates the responsibility of the collector to obtain as much knowledge as possible prior to parting with money. A cursory internet search will identify the fact that one retailer of good quality reproduction French cavalry swords universally uses the same inscription and date on every blade. An understanding of the poincons, their owners and their dates of operation yields valuable information.

For the collector of antique weapons, this year above all others, in the absence of artefacts from Agincourt must lead to Waterloo and the opportunity to own an historic artefact from this memorable period in history. The French were the defeated army on the day; however the quality of their weapons remains an enduring testimony to the commitment to high quality manufacturing, product control and the inimitable Gallic style.

Paul Wilcock
March 2015

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express grateful thanks to Mr David Peters, colleagues at the EPSRC Centre for Precision Technologies at the University of Huddersfield and National Physical Laboratories (NPL) Coordinate Measurement Laboratory in the 3M Buckley Innovation Centre.

The Reverend Paul Wilcock BEM is Director of the Arms and Armour Research Institute at the University of Huddersfield. He is also an Honorary Historical Consultant to the Royal Armouries and a Trustee of the York Army Museum. Paul is also an advisor to His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry and to the Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust.

24 Blondieu C., Sabres Français 1680-1814 Kepi Rouge Paris p. 262
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