

Obituary Norman Holme

By Major Martin Everett

It was with great sadness that I learnt of the death of Norman Holme on 23rd July. It was not the military strategy behind campaigners nor tactics involved which interested him, but it was the individual soldier who endured all the hardships of campaigning. His research brought the real human stories of the 19th century soldiering to life. I soon learnt that history after 1900 failed to interest him. I also began to realise that there was only one regiment in the British Army that in his estimation really counted – the 24th. This was unusual for someone who never served in the Regiment.

I suppose of all the British military campaigns of the 19th century, those that have really captured the imagination of the public are the Napoleonic Wars, the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava and the Defence of Rorke's Drift. Norman applied his mind to researching two of these famous actions and publishing the results. His *Military General Service Medal Roll of 23rd Foot, Medal Rolls of 24th Foot 1793-1889* (1971), and *The Silver Wreath* (1979) remain invaluable reference works for medal collectors world-wide and those with a keen interest in military and social history.

Norman was born at Bolton, Lancashire where he lived for many years before moving to Caernarfon in North Wales. He spent some time in the armed forces and later became an administrator in the National Health Service. Following his retirement, he took up the appointment as part-time Archivist at The Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum at Caernarfon Castle and was largely responsible for computerising their records. His keen interest in military history started in his school days and he devoted most of his spare time to researching medal rolls for the 23rd Regiment (The Royal Welch Fusiliers) and the 24th Regiment (South Wales Borderers). His years in the Reserve Forces, as a Weapons Training Instructor, also gave him a great interest and expertise in service weapons.

I got to know Norman well when working on the revised edition of *The Silver Wreath*. In the 20 years since its first publication, more information has come to light about the soldiers of the 24th Foot who fought at Isandhlwana (1) and Rorke's Drift. We would speak on the telephone at least twice a day, exchanging information and swapping stories. I shall miss his dry sense of humour and invaluable advice. Fortunately, the manuscript of his new book, to be called 'The Noble 24th' (I cannot fault the title, as it is a quote by Queen Victoria), was completed a few weeks before his death. It promises to be a worthy tribute to his hard work and painstaking research over a period of 35 years. It will be published shortly.

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Reference.

(1) It is a tradition of both the regiment and the museum that Isandhlwana is spelled with a 'h'. (Ed.)