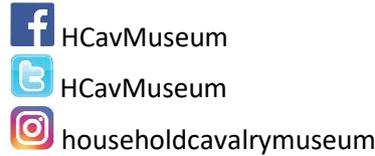




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TREASURES OF THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY

No: 9

THE ZETLAND TROPHY

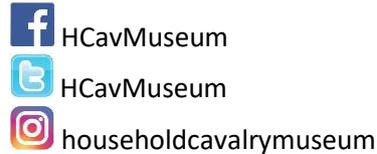
Hello, and welcome back to Treasures of the Household Cavalry, the video podcast series that looks at some of the remarkable items in the Household Cavalry's collection. I ended the 2020 series with Kaiser Wilhelm II's silver and enamel cigarette case, which he had given to the Royal Dragoons following his appointment as their Colonel in 1894. I am starting the 2021 series with another gift of silver, albeit one given by Lord Zetland in 1874 after he had left The Blues.

The practice of officers commemorating their service with a gift of silver – or in the case of the 2nd Life Guards, silver-gilt – started in the eighteenth century and coincided with the establishment of permanent Officers Messes within the barracks. Until 1922 there were three such Household Cavalry Messes, one for each regiment. Two were in London: at Hyde Park Barracks, shown here at the top left, and Regent Park Barracks, shown at the top right, and one was at Combermere Barracks in Windsor.



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On the rather fraught amalgamation of the 1st and 2nd Life Guards in 1922, Regent's Park Barracks was relinquished and much of the 2nd Life Guards silver was sold or removed by the heirs of the original donors, including a large service of silver-gilt known as the Galway plate. Fortunately, much of the silver that was offered for sale was acquired by The Life Guards NCO's Mess and so didn't leave the newly amalgamated regiment.

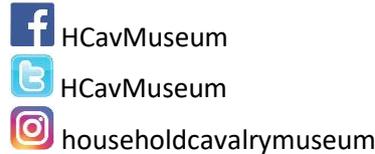
In the closing years of my own service with The Life Guards, I was – amongst other things – responsible for the Officers Mess silver, some of which was rather obviously in need of repair. At the time, the regiment was based at Lothian Barracks in Detmold, West Germany – that's the Officers Mess at the top left – and so I arranged for one of the directors of Tessier, the regiment's silversmiths, to fly out to make an assessment as to which pieces needed attention. He arrived quite late and went straight to bed.

The following morning, I took the Tessier director into breakfast in the dining room which, as was the custom at the time, was laid out with cereals, fruit juice, coffee and tea on a sideboard. Unlike our Colonel-in-Chief, whose cornflakes are reputedly dispensed from a Tupperware box, The Life Guards' cereals were, as always, in a silver



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soup tureen. Because of lockdown, I don't have a picture of this particularly piece of silverware, but here is a similar one... 'My God,' exclaimed the man from Tessier, when he went to help himself to Mr Kellogg's best-known product, 'what on earth are cornflakes doing in such a valuable piece of Paul Storr?'

By way of explanation, for those not versed in antique silver, Paul Storr is considered to be one of the greatest English silversmiths of all time and his work is highly collected. Fortunately for The Life Guards, the soup tureen is not our only piece of Storr's work, for it was he who also created the two pairs of priceless silver kettledrums presented to the 1st and 2nd Life Guards by King William IV. The 2nd Life Guards drums are still used on parade today, whilst the 1st's are in the museum.

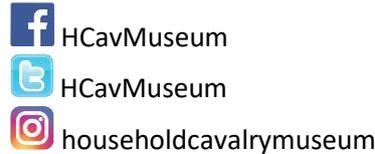
Not surprisingly, by lunchtime that day The Life Guards cornflakes had been moved into a less valuable piece of silver and the Paul Storr soup tureen became one of the centrepieces in use on the dining room table....

Which brings me back to the piece of silver given to The Blues in 1874 by the then Earl, later Marquess, of Zetland who, as plain



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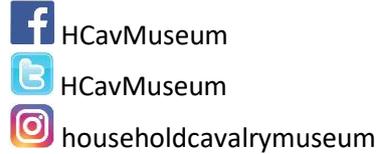
Lawrence Dundas had purchased a commission in The Blues in 1866. By all accounts, although much given to wearing his regiment's uniform around London, Dundas didn't spend a lot of time with the regiment. He resigned his commission in 1872 and left without presenting a gift to the Mess. It was only following the death of his uncle in 1873, when he became Earl of Zetland and a very rich man, that Dundas was reminded that he hadn't given The Blues a memento of his service and, somewhat under pressure, he decided to rectify the omission. The manner of his gift was, however, off hand to say the least: 'Oh, buy a piece of silver and send me the bill', he told his former brother officers. The Blues took him at his word and commissioned this massive centrepiece.

Made by Hunt & Roskell, it is so large that it takes four men to lift it and The Blues dining table had to be specially reinforced to bear the weight. Now in the Household Cavalry Museum, the Zetland Trophy is still occasionally moved back to the Mess for a dinner party... and what was the bill for this enormous piece of silver? Well, in 1874 it was £1,000 which, according to the Bank of England's inflation calculator, equates to £114,000 in today's money. I suspect that – while his former comrades laughed at their good fortune - even the well-heeled Lord Zetland drew breath at the eye-wateringly large bill.



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Next week, I'm going to be looking at some curious relics of the EOKA insurgency in Cyprus in the mid-1950s - and I will be recounting the story of a notorious accidental discharge. In the meantime, stay safe and stay well.