

Introduction:

In Search of the Light Brigade:

This book is an effort to provide the most complete and accurate list of the members of the five initial regiments of the Light Brigade from January 1, 1854 to March 31, 1856. I have read and reread the musters looking for the 3287 that purportedly went to the Crimea; when I totaled the list of names I had compiled who actually served in the Crimea, I was almost 100 names short. When I went back and included the names of individuals who embarked but never arrived (because they either died or were invalidated back) I came up with 3277 names. Based on this, I have concluded that the official return numbers were a list of men on embarkation lists. This would total well with my 3277, since I did not keep a count of men who were scheduled to embark and were missing on departure; I remember there were several and their names will show up on the lists of “did not embark”. With the addition of these few names, I have come alarmingly close to the 3287 figure, and can only assume that I have not missed many, if any at all. Another consideration is men who embarked with the regiment but were subsequently assigned staff duties or were part of the Command Staff, which might account for a few personnel. While I wanted to make a work to complement that of Lummis and Wynn, I found that several factors in that book had severely hampered my research. For this reason my book is formatted somewhat differently and has the following changes incorporated:

Organization: from “by rank” to “alphabetical”

Lummis and Wynn separated the Light Brigade into regiments, then began by listing individuals in descending order according to rank (the way they appear on the Muster Rolls). Within each rank, the names are sorted in descending order alphabetically (though some names are out of alphabetic sequence). They also listed the rank the person held on the day of the Charge . . . and since men were frequently promoted and demoted, their rank on even the next day could be different. If you did not know what regiment someone belonged to, you had a very difficult time finding their name: you had to check every regiment going through approximately 13 different ranks—or, in other words, you had to look in about 60 different places to verify if someone was a member of the Light Brigade. If the name was one of those out of alphabetic sequence, you might not ever find it. I spent two months corresponding with experts trying to verify one entry because I was looking in reference works for a “private”, but the individual in question was referred to as “sergeant” on his tombstone. If the names had been alphabetic by Regiment, I could have found this information in a matter of minutes. I have chosen to alphabetize all the listings. Names have been computer sorted, so they will appear in order just as the letters would dictate, not as might be indicated by convention; thus McAtee would come after Masters.

Alternative Spellings: from buried in the text to separate, cross referenced entries

When Lummis and Wynn found someone’s name spelled differently, they made a notation of the fact somewhere in their text. If you found the misspelled name “Punter” on a source document, you would have no idea of the correct spelling or where to find it in Lummis and Wynn. In my work, the alternative spellings which appear in a variety of original records have been included as separate entries with notes referring to the entry which I felt was the best guess at the proper spelling of the name. If a name was of a well-known veteran, I used the common spelling. If the name was spelled different ways on the Muster Rolls, I chose the spelling which occurred most often. Where a name was in doubt, I deferred to the spelling used in Lummis and Wynn, when available. Regardless, all variant name spellings are cross-referenced.

Notations to Identify Corrections:

If a name [rank on the day of the Charge, or Regimental Number] did not match the entry in Lummis and Wynn, I underlined the information which has been corrected. In the text of the entry I have provided the justification for the correction. Thus if I have corrected the spelling on a name in Lummis and Wynn, there will be an entry with the name spelled as they had it and a corrected entry with the name underlined to confirm that the correction was intentional.

Provision of Source Citations:

Lummis and Wynn only made summary footnotes to general reference documents. If you want to verify a specific fact, you have no idea where to go to confirm or deny the validity of the fact in question. For example, Lummis and Wynn have an entry for Sgt James Lay, 4th LD [30] and Cpl James Smy, 4th LD [33] with the same Regimental number. When you compare entries, you see that both have an enlistment date of March 1846. Is it a coincidence or are they referring to the same person. By using the Muster Rolls you can determine that “Smy” does not exist and was the result of misinterpreting some sloppy handwriting and not cross checking regimental numbers. So when I came across the names Robert Issett and Robert Issart, both in the 8th H, I naturally wondered if they could be the same person (they weren’t). Similarly I found two men with the same name, in the same regiment, and only two regimental numbers apart. The same man? No, I found separate entries almost side by side on the Muster Rolls. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the transcribers of the Musters often got the Regimental numbers wrong. Because of the aforementioned problems, I have tried to include footnotes for basically every fact listed; when a secondary source, such as Lummis and Wynn is used, it has been cited also. In this way, readers may check errors in my book to find out if it is a typographic error, or an error based on inaccurate research or information in primary and secondary documents.

Provision of Primary Source Information:

While there is no way that I could include everything I would have liked to include, I have tried to include as much as I was able to find that was not readily available in your average library which someone might need for researching the Light Brigade. I also tried to include enough so that the reader would not have to run to the bookshelf to answer simple question: for this reason I included maps of the Crimea, the Battle of Balaclava, and the not so common route of the Soreback Reconnaissance. I have included pictures of battles where Light Brigade members were reported to have been injured or killed preceding that action in the Casualty Rolls in the appendices. I have also transcribed all the first hand accounts I could

find, so that researchers could read what happened in the words of the participants themselves; when I noticed an obvious error (and I missed a great many), I added an editorial footnote.

Provision of Frequently Referred to Lists:

Lummis and Wynn made reference to which members of the Light Brigade were members of the Balaclava Commemoration Society of 1877 and 1879. If someone was a member on both lists, Lummis and Wynn frequently left out mention of membership to the 1877 list. The only copy I have been able to locate of these lists appears in Geoffrey Moore's Three Chose War. Because these lists frequently misspelled names, did not include Regimental numbers, and included names common to two or more members of the Regiment, I have provided a list of the original and corrected spellings which incorporates the Regimental number for identification purposes. Similarly, Lummis and Wynn made frequent reference to the Casualty List which appeared in the London Gazette, but did not include a copy of said material. I used the lists from Cook's Casualty Roll for the Crimea, having no access to the London Gazette materials. Again, many entries were misspelled, entries did not include Regimental numbers, and did not distinguish between individuals of the same name. Lummis and Wynn also provided details about other individuals who were injured and not listed on the Casualty Rolls, as well as additional details on the cause and extent of injuries; I felt that this should also be included in the Casualty Rolls, and where I found the original source of Lummis and Wynn's additional information, that, too, was footnoted. Lummis and Wynn also referred to people who attended the First Balaclava Banquet on October 25, 1875. The event was reported in the "Illustrated London News" on October 30, 1875; similarly, the ILN lists those who received their medals from the Queen in a ceremony held on May 18, 1855 in their issue of May 26th. I have included both of these lists for those without easy access to copies of these issues of the ILN.

Inclusion of a mini-tribute to James William Wightman:

Private James William Wightman, 1177, 17th Lancers was the first member of the Light Brigade that I found more than a couple of lines about. He became something of a personal favorite. Through the wonders of the internet, I became acquainted with one of his descendants, Ann Corby. I was able to provide her with information she did not have on Wightman, and she provided me with additional information from her family genealogical researches. With the assistance of Ken Horton, I was able to help her locate Wightman's grave in Brompton Cemetery. She found the area overgrown and the tombstone toppled; with the help of her grandson, Christopher, she restored the gravesite to its original condition. When I wrote to request her permission to use some of the material which she had found in the book, she not only consented, but shared material from further researches at the 17th Lancers Museum including the youthful photo of Wightman and the account of his adventures in India, which she had procured at the 17th Lancers Museum. I contacted Terry Brighton and Captain Mick Holtby, and they kindly allowed me to include the materials in a tribute to Wightman, as well as providing a couple of other unique photos which have also been included in this work.

Inclusion of an expanded, annotated Bibliography

I know as I began my research on the Light Brigade, I often had no idea what resources were out there. For this reason I have included a fairly extensive bibliography related to the Light Brigade, as well as a few general Crimean War resources, for the beginner. I have included some duplication in order to make reference to these bibliographies easier. I am indebted to David Cliff for allowing me to use material from his extensive Crimean War bibliographies. I have also included a quick compilation of internet sites which have large amounts of Crimean related material, with preference for those with original documents or those related to the Light Cavalry regiments.