

British Coffin Hilted Swords

Over a number of years I have collected British Cavalry Troopers swords. As in many collecting fields one sometimes deviates away from the original theme. Such is the case with my collecting which varied into Officers' swords etc.

The so called Coffin Top hilted sword was always so elusive in Australia, in fact "where would you find one". At a Melbourne Gun show some years back I met a dealer from South Australia who regularly attended the Gun shows. In conversation with him re such swords, he said he had one, albeit damaged and missing the knuckle bow and no scabbard. The sword turned up at the next venue and I snapped it up immediately.



The South Australian start [sic][State?]

Lanark Dumfries Regiment

Research and conferring with fellow collectors is paramount in comparing knowledge of collecting in any form. My research led me into books such as Robson's book "Swords of the British Army" along with correspondence with the British Museum in Leeds. From these sources of research I was able to restore the sword hilt to what it would have been originally. The scabbard was lifted or copied from Robson's book.

Since then I have acquired three more Coffin Hilted swords from overseas and the following, covers what I consider to be the most unique British Hilted sword following on from the 1788 Light Cavalry types during the period 1792-1802.



Honourable Artillery Company 1794



Warwickshire Light Dragoons



Collection of four swords

When researching one's collecting, the roads lead one all over the world and the following are examples of variations to the Coffin Hilt Swords. They certainly are not the only ones of these types so one can only keep researching.



The Hudson Bay Company in Canada around 1796.

Description: Having a 27" curved blade with single wide fullers. Engraved with figural, crown and arms panoplies. Left ricasso marked: "L. Bennett Royal". Stirrup hilt, languets engraved with GMN scrolled monogram, the reverse with English coat of arms. Cones-shaped quillon finial. Back strap engraved with an oval crest. Keyhole pommel. Checkered one-piece ivory grip. Contained in black leather scabbard with three gold-finished mounts. Top mount engraved with a coat of arms. Reverse inscribed: Bennett/Sword Cutler/to the/Prince of Wales/7/Royal Exchange. Two ring mounts. Blade with wear and pitting. Hilt with wear commensurate with use. Grip chipped. Scabbard leather with cracks and wear. Mounts with wear and separations. Condition (Good).



The hilt of the Hudson Bay Company sword.



Presentation sword, which belonged to Admiral Sir John Thomas Duckworth (1748-1817) by sword maker S. Brunn.



This sword is owned by R Dellar and has similarities to my brass hilted sword albeit this one has a Blued & Gilt blade.



The Warwickshire Light Dragoons sword is considered rare and after many hours of research I can only find reference to the swords as above. The far right hand picture was shown as being WLD type but the quillon and the langets are different. The second sword is my WLD purchased in Nov 2016.



If one has the money, the sword above was bought by the Prince of Wales as a gift and certainly would be a "one off."



The Sword above is also very rare and one of sixteen swords ordered by the Prince of Wales in 1792 from Robert Foster of St James, Sword Cutler to His Majesty "The Prince of Wales."

The gift of the swords was to the Officers of the 10th Light Dragoons and so marked on the Langets XLD and the Prince of Wales Ostrich Feathers motto "Ich Dien" meaning "I Serve", adopted after the battle of Crécy (1346). I consider that this sword to be the best example of swords for Officer use as opposed to the one off type for notable Royalty etc.



This rare 1788 Pattern Light Cavalry Officer's sword in Gilt brass was for the 7th Light Dragoons and described in Robson's book.



Another type but not regimentally marked is very similar and again shows the type of scabbard associated with these type of swords and was made by T Gill.

This type of scabbard I used to copy the Warwickshire Light Dragoons sword I own which was also made by T Gill in 1794. A copy of both scabbards i.e. in leather and steel is shown below.





Warwickshire Light dragoon sword and two scabbards.

Leather option that may be in keeping of style, metal fittings lifted from supposed Gill sword mid-1790s.
All steel copy of a known T Gill scabbard as supplied by Richard Dellar.
Both scabbards were made in March/April 2017 by Mike Royle from Victoria AUSTRALIA.

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Note - edited by SG in 2023.

Appendix (by SG): other examples...



10th (Prince of Wales Own) Light Dragoons. 78cm curved blade, pommel set with the Prince of Wales feathers



Royal Horse Artillery sword. Made between 1793 and 1795 by Knubley of 7 Charing Cross. The pommel cap and the scabbard both bear the arms of the Board of Ordnance under whose command and control the Royal Regiment of Artillery fell, hence the arms were shared by the RA. The blade is by J J Runkel, Sohlingen