

MEETING WITH PETITIONERS ON 12 MARCH 2014

ENCLOSURE C – BACKGROUND NOTE ON THE MUSEUM NAME

1. Differing perceptions and recollections

The name of the Museum has been a central feature of the current controversy within the Regimental Family. The disagreement is not only about what the name should be, but also about when it changed, and on whose watch that happened.

The name has been **The Highlanders' Museum (Queen's Own Highlanders Collection)** for many years. There have been suggestions, however, that the museum only became "The Highlanders' Museum" during the redevelopment project, which was completed in 2013, and that "Queen's Own Highlanders Collection" has only now been "tagged on" to the name in an attempt to "appease" concerns.

Specifically, Kelvin Hunter (Petitioner), who had been a key worker at the Museum rising to the post of Curator, maintains that the name was only changed to the current name after he left the Museum in 2008.

The aim of this note is to identify the reasons for the apparently stark differences in perceptions about the name. **This note does not attempt to discuss the respective merits of alternative names.**

The documentary evidence, most of which was publicly available at the time and is still publicly available, shows that:

- 1.1. The current name "The Highlanders' Museum (Queen's Own Highlanders Collection)" has been in force for at least 13 years, in terms of the all-important "CSA" agreement with the MOD dated August and November 2000. (See Agenda Enclosure B).
- 1.2. The current name is not only the official legal name of the Museum, but was brought into actual public use after the signing of the CSA.
- 1.3. The CSA was mentioned in several museum reports in the regimental magazine *The Highlander*, but the change of name was not given any prominence at the time. There was a subtle and easily overlooked change in the terminology used at the time, especially in the heading of the museum reports; see para 5 below.
- 1.4. With the museum's declared aim of being the primary regimental museum for both The Queen's Own Highlanders and The Highlanders, the phrase "Regimental Museum" conveniently meant different things to different people. This ambiguous language was used for excellent reasons at the time, but appears to have left a legacy of misunderstanding, which is contributing to the current discord among some Queen's Own Highlanders.
- 1.5. Following the "Highland Heritage" Appeal, the museum's closure for redevelopment and its reopening on 26 March 2013, the Museum could have been

quicker in reverting to full use of the correct name across the range of information material, etc. For example, the “new” website was always intended to reflect the full correct name, but the name was not updated on the “old” website.

1.6. The name remains “The Highlanders’ Museum (Queen’s Own Highlanders Collection)” and continues in widespread use in signage, information material, souvenir goods, packaging items and the website.

2. MOD Customer Supplier Agreement (CSA)

The Customer Supplier Agreement (“CSA”) was signed on behalf of the Queen’s Own Highlanders Amalgamation Trustees on 30 Aug 2000, and on behalf of Ministry of Defence (Army) on 8 Nov 2000. A copy of the CSA is available on the cabarfeidh.com website, and has also been circulated as Enclosure B to the Agenda for the forthcoming meeting. Amongst other imperatives, the CSA unambiguously names the museum as “The Highlanders Museum (Queen’s Own Highlanders Collection)”.

3. Website evidence – non MOD

As an example of awareness of the name in the regimental family, the website of the Strathclyde Branch of the Queen’s Own Highlanders Regimental Association has several pieces of information about the Museum, including contact details:

Regimental Museum of The Highlanders
The Queen’s Own Highlanders Collection
Fort George...

An internet archive shows that exactly the same detail has been on the Strathclyde website since 2004, if not earlier. This can be checked at snipurl.com/28nrxhv .

(An earlier item on the same web page refers to the “Queens Own Highlanders Regimental Museum Collection”, showing again how the presentation of the name evolved.)

The full Museum name has been correctly listed on the Burma Star Association website since 2002. Their “Cameron Highlanders” page is at www.burmastar.org.uk/cameronhigh.htm ; archived versions can be checked at snipurl.com/28nszwh . (All web pages accessed on 6.3.2013.)

The current Museum name actually appeared on the internet as early as 1998, more than two sstamped posts of Mar 1998 containing contact details for the Museum, in which its full name is set out just as it is today: “The Highlanders Museum (Queen’s Own Highlanders Collection)”.

4. Website evidence – official MOD Army website

The Highlanders Regiment’s official www.army/mod/uk/highlanders/museums web page no longer exists, but snapshots of the page can still be seen via an internet archive - snipurl.com/28nufee .

Our museum was initially listed on this official as “The Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons) Regimental Museum”.

Subsequently our museum’s listing appeared for some time without any name or heading, although the “Gordon Highlanders Regimental Museum” was still mentioned by name.

When our museum’s name reappeared on the page in Jun 2004, it had changed to “Regimental Museum of The Highlanders (The Queen’s Own Highlanders Collection)”, and the Gordons’ Museum was listed simply as “The Gordon Highlanders Museum”. The page continued to develop but both museum names remained unchanged until the formation of the Royal Regiment of Scotland in 2006, and the eventual removal of the page in 2008.

5. Regimental magazine of The Highlanders Regiment - “The Highlander”

In support of their contentions about the name of the Museum, the petitioners’ representatives have produced a photograph in the Summer 2000 edition of *The Highlander*. The photo includes a “Queen’s Own Highlanders Regimental Museum” sign outside the Museum entrance. That sign must, however, have been made before the CSA came into force in Nov 2000, following which there was probably no real requirement or pressure to change existing signage.

Those Summer 2000 *Highlander* magazine notes are of interest, however. The writer refers to the importance of visitor numbers; the Victorian origins of the antecedent museum collections as officers’ mess property; the formation of the Queen’s Own Highlander collection in the 1960s; and the dual role of our museum “as a permanent tribute to all those who have served in the Queen’s Own Highlanders...” and, “just as important, the Regimental Museum also provides a splendid shop window for *The Highlanders*...”

The Winter 2000 issue reported that the CSA had been signed “after a year’s trial run”; the Trustees were also negotiating a 50-year lease of the Museum building at a nominal rent: “Both these measures, when finalised, should do much to secure the long-term future of the Regimental Museum at Fort George.”

Even before the signing of the CSA in 2000, the heading of our museum’s magazine notes evolved from the unambiguous “The Regimental Museum of the Queen’s Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons)” (e.g. issue 1, Summer 1995); to “The Regimental Museum / The Queen’s Own Highlanders’ Museum Collection, Fort George” (e.g. Winter 1996); to “The Regimental Museum at Fort George / The Queen’s Own Highlanders Collection” (e.g. Winter 2002).

In contrast, the museum at Viewfield Road Aberdeen is listed throughout as “The Gordon Highlanders Museum”.

Other Fort George museum notes stress the importance of visitor numbers, the need for long-term sustainability of the museum, the implications of a review of Army museums and

developments in the wider museum world, and concerns over the availability of exhibition and storage space, with accessions continuing to be received. The museum's dual "Queen's Own Highlanders" and "Highlanders" roles continue to be mentioned from time to time, and stress is placed on the status of Fort George as the lead Regimental Museum.

6. Pre-1994 names of the Museum and its Collection

Generally referred to as "The Regimental Museum", the full name of the pre-1994 museum was "Regimental Museum of The Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons)".

"The Queen's Own Highlanders Collection" term originates from the amalgamation of the Seaforth and 79th (Camerons) Collections at Fort George in 1964-66. It appears to have been used interchangeably with "The Queen's Own Highlanders Museum Collection", i.e., for curatorial purposes, the Museum Collection of The Queen's Own Highlanders.

Our museum has never formally been "The Queen's Own Highlanders Museum" although, naturally enough, many of us would have used that expression on occasions when "The Regimental Museum" was not sufficient.

7. Conclusions

"The Queen's Own Highlanders Collection" was formed following the regimental amalgamation of 1961.

"The Highlanders Museum" title was created following the regimental amalgamation of 1994.

The combined title "The Highlanders' Museum / Queen's Own Highlanders Collection" has been the official name of our museum since 2000.

In view of the ambiguity in the way the name was presented during the Highlanders period 1994-2006, it is understandable that there are differing perceptions and recollections as to what is the correct name of the Museum.

There is no suggestion that, during the Highlanders period, other terms such as "Queen's Own Highlanders Museum" never appeared in print, or on signage etc or in conversation; who among us would have objected?

The record clearly shows, however, that "Highlanders' Museum / Queen's Own Highlanders Collection" has not only been the official registered name of our museum since 2000, but was in increasing actual use from that date.