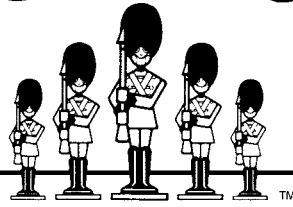


Summer  
2021

The Journal for Collectors

Volume 45 Number 2  
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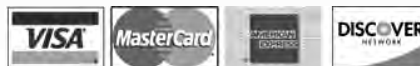
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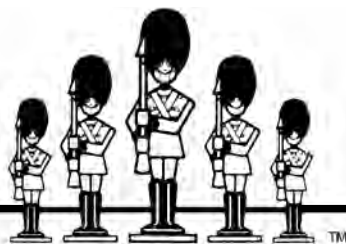


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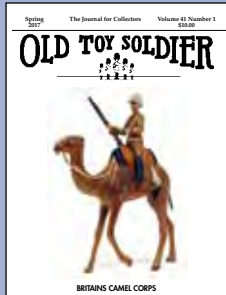
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**ON THE COVER**

The Commanding Officer from Set 323 - A much rarer figure than you might think, see the article by Joe Wallis.

*Photo courtesy: Rob Wilson*

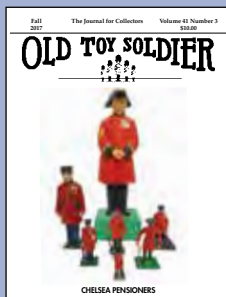
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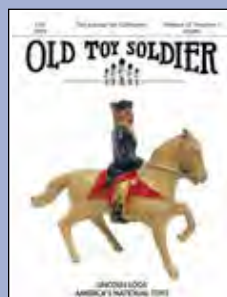
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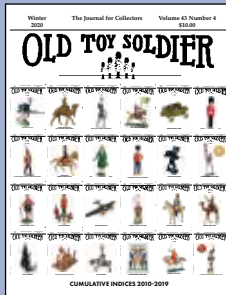
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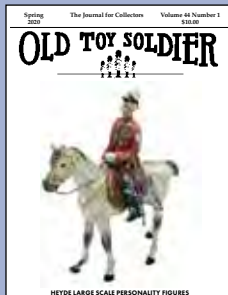


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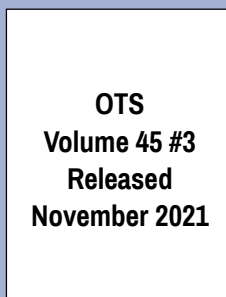
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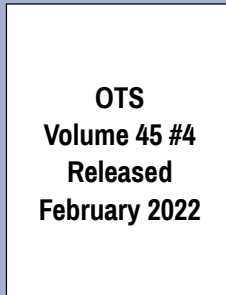
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## ~ Editorial ~

Summer has arrived with a bang for many of us. With it comes the prospect of some light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, as show organizers beaver away to get things back to something like normal. The famous Chicago Show will celebrate its 40th anniversary in September, while many others are hopeful to restart in the second half of 2021. Jan and Roger Garfield provide some reflections on the history of the Chicago show later in this issue.



Also in the current issue, Richard Forrester, provides some fascinating background on one of Britain's early competitors Hanks.

Francesco Marchiandi celebrates the 200th anniversary of the death of Napoleon with his collection of toy figures by French and other makers. As the author notes, Napoleon has provided the inspiration for many generations of toy soldier makers and collectors.

Online collecting continues to throw up a few surprises, as reported in the Reconnaissance section. While searching online does not have quite the same buzz as being able to see and handle figures "in the flesh", it provides many opportunities to add to and enhance a collection.

Thanks to a number of readers for their various messages commenting upon articles in previous issues. Please do keep them coming! Even when they are critical, authors love to get feedback on their efforts.

Some readers may be wondering why we have chosen to place the relatively common Britains US Cavalry figure on the front cover. Look again more carefully. It is in fact a very rare find. As Joe Wallis describes in his review of Britain's Large Display sets containing US types, it is an example of a figure only to be found in one of the rarest of sets. This makes it one of the rarest figures from a standard catalogued set. Only minor paint variations distinguish the figure from the common Set 229 figure!

Will Beierwaltes follows up his piece on Sentry Box models with a companion article about the work of Howard Willetts. Like the early Sentry Box figures, Willetts worked in plaster rather than lead alloys.

Last, but by no means least, the interview with Joe Demarco and Bill O'Brien reminds us all that the crucial question about the hobby is "are you having fun?" Hopefully, this issue will help all our readers to give a positive answer to that question.

## ***SHOWS COMING BACK TO LIFE***

While the pandemic continues to play havoc with major events, a number of people are working hard to get things back to normal, including those who organize Toy Soldier and related Toy Shows. As reported elsewhere in this issue Roger and Jan Garfield have been beaver away to ensure that we can all enjoy the Chicago show once again. Other US shows are also planned - see the Calendar.

In Europe, the famous Kulmbach show has been postponed to 2022 (12-14th August). However, Eurofigurines are hoping to restart their Paris show in October, while in the UK the famous Sandown Toy Fair is scheduled to restart in September (18th) and the London Toy Soldier Show is scheduled for December 4th 2021.

***Let's hope that all this hard work bears fruit.***

## Obituary - Ed Fitzgerald

by Steve Sommers

Edward (Ed, Fitz) Fitzgerald, began collecting Britains Ltd. toy soldiers in the 1960s. He was introduced to, and purchased from, "Uncle Gus" Hansen, Chicago's famous toy soldier dealer. Fitz might get a call from "Auggie" early on a Saturday morning announcing that he had dug up a collection and he had put aside what Ed was looking for. If he didn't want to lose it, Ed had best show up at the following appointed time! And like so many of us, Ed did. Of course, like the rest in the hobby, it was hard to resist the growing number of sales lists, shops, auctions and markets.



There in 1963 he earned his BA in accounting and in 1972 an MS degree in Taxation from DePaul University in Chicago. In 1963 he had joined the firm of Arthur Young & Co. where he became a CPA and ultimately a partner in Tax Accounting. During his career he taught at Loyola of Chicago, Creighton, Daetroit Mercy and the University of Nebraska. After his retirement from Arthur Young he became the Chief Financial Officer of Boys Town. He served on many Boy Scout, church on University boards.

Consistently, Fitz focused on Britains red-jacketed British troops with a smattering of khaki added. These military and civilian Britains figures peopled his rambling display that included an English town, military airfield and Hornby railroad layout. Although his shelves were extensive, it is clear that Fitz's delight was in presentation. Eventually, exhausting hollowcast Britains, he began collecting new makers in the traditional Britains style, but now focusing on American units from the Spanish American War to WW2. He also had a passion for toy and model tanks, in all scales by many makers, as well as a run of ID models. Not surprisingly, Ed had served his military duty as an Army Tank Officer.

Beyond toy soldiers, he had an impressive collection of Hornby O-scale railroad, as well as a collection of scale models and toys of fire engines. He had a huge interest in Winston Churchill which was reflected in figures, books and other ephemera. All these interests were supported by his extensive library of twentieth century military history. Ed was a quiet collector with a droll, ironic sense of humor covering his exceptional abilities as a businessman.

Ed was born in Chicago but raised in Winnetka where he became an Eagle Scout and began a life long connection with Scouting. He was a devout Catholic, attending Loyola Academy and the University of Notre Dame.

In our hobby Ed was one of the original 80 collectors to subscribe to OTSN's initial issue. Over the years he published a number of thoughtful and well-researched articles in OTSN, particularly on tanks and artillery. Early in our publication he offered us his financial advice. In January 1984 he became a minority partner helping us to establish OTSN, Inc as a Subchapter S Corporation. His contributions to our magazine and Old Toy Soldier Show were not always visible, but they were great.

Edward W. Fitzgerald is survived by Nancy his wife of 57 years, his three children Margaret, Ted and John and three grandchildren. He will be missed. Edward W. Fitzgerald 2/8/1941 to 2/19/2021



## "ALL SYSTEMS ARE GO" for the 2021 Chicago Toy Soldier Show!



**Show managers Jan and Roger Garfield announced that this September's event will be a full Sunday Show, preceded by pre-Show room display and sales as in past years.**

Jan and Roger met with management at the Hyatt Regency Schaumburg a few days after the official reopening of Chicago that occurred on June 11th. After meeting with staff at the Show's venue, Jan and Roger were confident that "barring any COVID setbacks, this year's Show will be the Show that vendors and attendees have known these past 39 years."

**"We are planning the pre-Show workshops, demonstrations, and seminars that have part of the Chicago Toy Soldier Show in recent years," shared Jan.**

Jan and Roger say there are still some logistical details to hammer out as we get closer to September. The 40th anniversary event, postponed from last year, will be held at the Hyatt Regency Schaumburg in Schaumburg, Illinois, on Sunday, September 26th. Pre-Show events will begin on Thursday, September 23rd. Roger said, "we are ecstatic to have wrested our Show back from COVID 19. . . we are ready to see our collector friends and have some long-awaited toy soldier fun!"



# 40<sup>th</sup> Annual

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# BRITAINS LARGE AMERICAN SETS

By Joe Wallis



1. Set 323 Whistock lid label: "TYPES of USA FORCES. Infantry, Cavalry, Marines, Artillery, Officers, etc"



2. The top layer - Marines and Bluejackets, West Point Cadets in Summer and Winter dress, US Cavalry (lead, by the Commanding Officer), Artillery and motorcycle dispatch rider.



3. The lower layer - more US Cavalry, including 10 matching figures galloping, Doughboys with matching Officer and two machine gunners

It was not until 1929 that Britains Limited produced display boxes of U.S.A. Forces. They began focusing on American troops in 1925 but obviously had subsequently enjoyed substantial sales in the American market coinciding with the economic boom times of the "Roaring Twenties."

So, when the 1929 New Lines List appeared, it featured many American troops among the sets (271 through 351) inaugurated in that listing. Among them were two American Armed Forces sets that offered more than 40 pieces each—which I have adopted as a definition of a really "large" set. While the cost of Sets 323 and 324 meant that they could not be acquired by school children from their allowances or even by the average adult collector, they do highlight the success being achieved in the United States by Britains. Of course, the Great Depression then hit in October 1929 and reduced Britains sales across-the-board.

Set #323 was a large display box composed of 73 pieces representing all of the types of U.S. troops issued to date when it appeared in the 1929 Lines List (except for Set 91 from the Spanish American War era). According to the Factory Records (which I reflected in the revised edition of *Armies of the World*), its roster included seven West Point Cadets marching in all-grey uniforms from Set 226, a fixed-arm officer and eleven marching U.S. Infantry with "Doughboy" hats from Set 227, a sergeant and six U.S. Marines marching from Set 228, thirteen empty-handed U.S. Cavalry troopers with peaked caps on walking horses from Set 229, seven U.S. Navy "Bluejacket" Sailors from Set 230, seven U.S. Cavalry troopers with Stetson hats holding rifles from Set 276, seven West Point Cadets in Summer dress white trousers from Set 299, as well as three adaptations with peak caps of sets first issued as British Army sets. These included a cantering officer holding an outstretched sword, a limber drawn by six walking horses (three of which were ridden by drivers holding whips) and a gun—all from Set

## BRITAINS LARGE AMERICAN SETS *(Continued)*



**4. The Artillery set with officer - only available in this set; just minor paint differences distinguish this from Set 144a/1440 the Royal Artillery in service dress.**

144A Royal Field Artillery, but redone with grey belts and puttees. The gun initially was the unnumbered type sold singly as a "Gun of the Royal Artillery" and part of all the horse-drawn gun teams issued for the British Army. By 1933 an improved gun with a shield entered the catalog as Set 1201 and was inserted into Set 323 in place of the Victorian cannon. Two lying firing machine gunners from Set 194 were provided in Set 323, but with grey puttees and cap visors. (In 1930, a single-row six-piece box of lying U.S. machine gunners was issued as Set 359.) In addition, a solitary Motorcycle Dispatch Rider on the first version fixed-wheel motorcycle from Set 200 was also supplied in Set 323. He wears grey puttees, a large grey pouch on the left side of his belt for dispatches, and a grey visor on his cap. In 1939 the new revolving wheel motorcyclist from Set 1791 replaced the first version fixed-wheel one in Set 323. The 73rd piece in Set 323 was an empty-handed U.S. Cavalry officer in peak cap riding a walking horse. The Factory Records show him to be the same body casting, head, and arm as in Set 229, but as the accompanying photograph from Rob Wilson's collection shows, there were brown reins painted on his horse and he had brown gloves. Rob's set varies a little from the contents outlined in the Factory Records: his set shown in the photographs accompanying this article has eleven troopers on walking horses from Set 229 instead of 13 and ten rather than nine troopers from Set 276. This may reflect what painted castings were readily at hand at the Britains Factory the day that this Set 323 was boxed up and sent out for sale.

From its inception in 1929 through 1931, Set 323 sold for 42 shillings (or two pounds two shillings). The Great Depression motivated Britains to trim its prices, so Set 323 was listed for 39 shillings from 1932-1939. This price reduction was consistent with the simultaneous decrease of the Firm's single-row boxes from one shilling nine pence to one shilling 7½ pence (nine percent in each case). But the October 1940 and the July 1941 Price Lists raised the price of Set 323 from 39 shillings to 48 shillings 9 pence (a 20 percent increase). At the same time, five-piece cavalry and eight-piece infantry boxes went from one shilling 7½ pence to two shillings (a 19 percent jump). Another gauge of

Set 323 is that 24 single-row sets could be bought for about the same amount as this 73-piece display box. But then the larger box offered the variety of 21 cavalry, 40 infantry, two machine gunners, one motorcyclist, and a nine-piece gun team.

Another prewar display box of American troops was Set 324; its 81 pieces could be purchased for only 19 shillings 6 pence because it was all infantry and cavalry without a gun team. It had the following contents: twelve West Point Cadets from Set 226, a fixed-arm officer and eleven men from Set 227, a sergeant and eleven Marines from Set 228, twelve Bluejackets marching



**5. The US Army motor cycle dispatch rider - again only available in this set, but similar apart from minor paint distinctions to Set 200 (British Army) "Motor Cycle Dispatch Riders"**



**6. US Army machine gunners - just two in this set**



## BRITAINS LARGE AMERICAN SETS *(Continued)*



**7. The Commanding Officer (left) greets a comrade - unique to this set; only the brown gloves and reins on his horse differentiate him from the other ranks.**

from Set 230, twelve empty-handed Cavalry from Set 229, twelve men wearing gas masks and steel helmets walking at the trail re-enlisted from British Set 258, and nine lying firing machine gunners in peak caps that subsequently appeared in Set 359. (Later, noncatalogued Set 1419 also featured eight U.S. Infantry walking at the trail from Set 258.)

Britains also produced ten more large prewar noncatalogued boxes of U.S. Forces that contained more than 40 pieces. Set 383 held cavalry, Marines, Sailors, and machine gunners among its 37 pieces. Set 472 was a simple box of 40 pieces with both types of West Point Cadets from Sets 226 and 299. Set 473 provided a total of 40 U.S. Marines and Navy Bluejackets from Sets 228 and 230. In 1933 Britains issued several large

noncatalogued boxes as Sets 1278-1282. Set 1278 offered 41 pieces including four lying and two kneeling firing U.S. "Doughboys" from Set 1251 along with two Infantry that used the casting from Set 91 standing on guard with a fixed bayonet, but painted khaki instead of dark blue. Set 1279 had 64 pieces and incorporated eight firing Doughboys from Set 1251, as well as ten of the men wearing gas masks and steel helmets walking at the trail from British Set 258. Set 1280 featured 80 pieces, adding twelve firing men from Set 1251, six marching Whitejacket Sailors from Set 1253, and six khaki Marines from Set 399 to figures from Sets 227, 228, 229, 230, 276, and 359. Then there was the 111-piece assortment found in Set 1281, it "gilded the lily" by furnishing even larger groups of Cavalry, plus Cadets, Infantry marching and

firing, Marines in dark blue and in khaki marching, Bluejackets and Whitejackets marching, and lying machine gunners. The same is true of Set 1282 and its 126 pieces: four of the khaki standing on guard Infantry based upon Set 91 were the only idiosyncratic component.

In 1937 a more remarkable noncatalogued box was issued as Set 1534. It was allotted only 41 pieces, but they included a mountain battery with four mules and the small artillery gun from Set 28, a mounted officer with peak cap on a walking horse from Set 229, and six empty-handed Doughboys taken from Set 227 assigned as gunners; in addition there was a fixed-arm officer and ten infantry marching with rifles from Set 227, seven empty-handed cavalry with peak caps from Set 229, seven cavalry with rifles and Stetson hats from Set 276, two buglers with peak caps first seen as part of British Set 1407, and two side drummers from Set 1301. Finally, Britains released an eighty-piece box as Set 1535. It comprised an officer and thirty-one Infantry from Set 227, twelve of the men with steel helmets and gas masks walking at the trail derived from Set 258, eight lying firing machine gunners from Set 359, eight lying and eight kneeling firing Doughboys from Set 1251, seven cavalry with peak caps from Set 229, and seven cavalry with rifles and Stetson hats from Set 276. For more extensive details of the contents of these large noncatalogued U.S. boxes, see the hard-cover edition of my *Armies of the World* book.

The likelihood of finding any of these ten large noncatalogued boxes of U.S. Armed Forces is very small as they were probably an order from one store and not stocked for more than perhaps one Christmas Season. The same is true even for Sets 323 and 324 that were listed in the catalog from 1929 through 1941, but would not have sold in any great quantities because of their cost.

*Note: the photographs for this article were taken by Rob Wilson.*



**8. and 9. Set 1278 & 1282 - rare standing in guard figures in service dress (front and rear views)**

# AUCTION PREVIEW

OLD TOY SOLDIER



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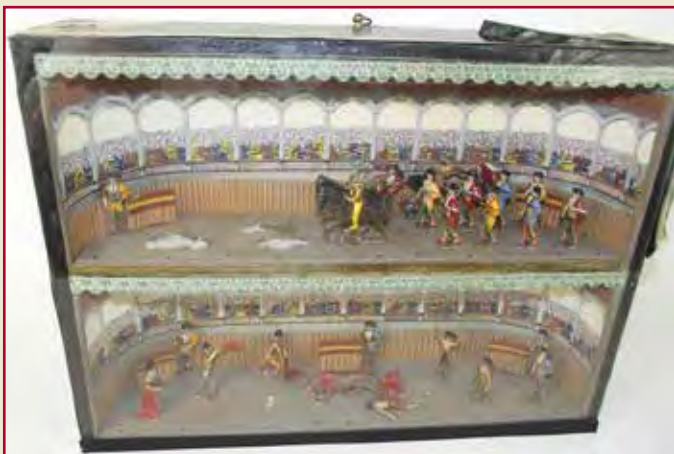


# AUCTION PREVIEW *(Continued)*





# AUCTION PREVIEW *(Continued)*





## **AUCTION PREVIEW** *(Continued)*



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# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

By Richard Forrester

## Background

The success of W. Britain and Company, in capturing a large share of the toy soldier market in the UK from the German imports through their hollow-cast production method, quickly led to other local manufacturers seeking to emulate Britain's example. Hanks Brothers was one of the earliest of these competing British hollow-cast toy soldier makers to produce a volume of figures that are recognisable and collectible today.

*Hanks Brothers*, the toy soldier manufacturer, was started by Orlando Hanks, who was born about 1846<sup>1</sup> in the London suburb of St. Luke's, Islington, and his two sons Orlando Horace and Albert Edward Hanks.

Orlando Hanks initially began working with metals as a brass turner, but shortly afterwards began to call himself an Engineer<sup>2</sup>. In Victorian Britain this generally meant a person working on or with steam powered machines and metal fabrications. Orlando married Alice Smith, whose occupation as a Wax Modeller<sup>3</sup> could quite possibly be the root of the skills acquired by the Hanks Brothers business in sculpting the company's later toy soldier figures.

By 1889 some clues emerge which point to what Orlando Hanks was doing at this time. Two separate reports are found in the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette informing that Orlando had listed patents for his new inventions. The first is a patent for 'improvements and means of opening bottles with internal ball stoppers closed by air or other gases'<sup>4</sup> and the second is 'a puzzle, called "London to Paris and back by train"'.<sup>5</sup> This was Orlando Hanks' first known

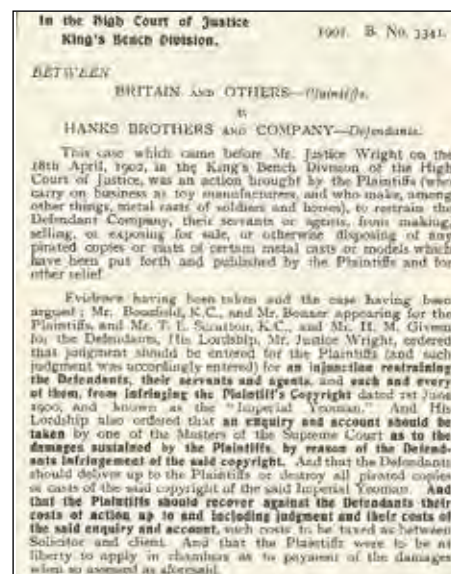
venture into toy making. By 1891 he and his two sons, Orlando Horace and Albert Edward, who were then aged 19 and 17 respectively, are recorded in the UK Census of that year to be Tin Toy Makers.<sup>6</sup> By 1895 Orlando Hanks' toy business had grown to the extent that he needed to advertise in the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette for teenage boys to assist in tin toy making.<sup>7</sup>

However, on 31 March 1901, when the next UK Census was called, the now 55 year-old Orlando Hanks and both his sons, 29 year-old Orlando Horace and 27 year-old Albert Edward, had changed their recorded occupations to *Metal Toy Maker*.<sup>8</sup> The first of six phases of involvement of the Hanks name with toy soldier manufacture had commenced.

## 'Hanks Brothers' Toy Soldier era: 1901 to 1911

The beginning of the Hanks family's move into the toy soldier business is confirmed to be around early

1901 by the successful legal action brought against Hanks Bros and Co by William Britain in the High Court King's Bench on 18 April 1902. The case brought by Britain alleged that Hanks Bros. had pirated Britain's toy soldier models, and specifically a yeoman on a horse (*a reference to Britain's Imperial Yeomanry set*



April 1902 W. Britain successfully sued Hanks Brothers.



W. Britain successfully sued Hanks Brothers in April 1902 for copying a marked and dated figure but Britain's early Line Infantry figures were not similarly marked. (LEFT) W. Britain East Kent 'The Buffs' Regiment figure from Set 16 (RIGHT) Hanks Bros. version of 'The Buffs' figure. (Rob Wilson collection)

1 1871, 1881, 1901 England Census records

2 1871 England Census record

3 ibid

4 Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 26 July 1889, Pg3

5 Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 23 August 1889, Pg3

6 1891 England Census record

7 Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 18 July 1900, Pg4

8 1901 England Census record

9 *Rival Toy Maker*. The Barnet Press, Finchley & Hendon News. 3 May 1902 Pg2

# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)



Hanks Russian cavalryman. The horse is a copy of W. Britain's Indian Cavalry horse from sets 45, 46, and 47, first issued 1896. This figure has no movable arm and a different head similar to that used on the Britain's Cossack (Rob Wilson collection)



Hanks Line Infantry figures with movable arms 'at trail' and 'at slope' have a distinctive shaped rifle. These figure are simply marked 'H.Hanks' on the top rim of the base. (Norman Joplin collection)



105), and that this was a breach of the Sculpture Copyright Act. The fact that Britain was protesting about a toy soldier figure that was already in the market suggests that the start date for Hanks Brothers & Co toy soldiers must be early 1901. W. Britain was successful in their action because the Britain's Imperial Yeomanry figure had been marked with W. Britain's name and the 1.6.1900 creation date of the original mould.<sup>9</sup> However, Rob Wilson, who has a sizable collection of Hanks figures, says that he has never seen the offending Hanks Imperial Yeomanry figure.

Earlier W. Britain figures had not been embossed in the same way. Hanks Brothers, at least in these early years, made many other figures which were close copies of Britain's figures.

The lack of any catalogues of Hanks figures makes identification difficult, and while most early Hanks figures are not marked, they can be distinguished, according to James Opie, by moveable arms which have 'a distinctive style of rifle'<sup>10</sup> and were cast in a 'rather bright, light metal that was too shiny to take the paint well, so they tend to be somewhat more flaked than other makes'<sup>11</sup>.

Additionally, on Hanks' earlier mounted figures the inside of the horse's legs is flat and un-sculpted when compared to similar W. Britain figures. Many of Hanks mounted figures also have a girth strap on the horse's belly in contrast to Britain's figures which do not have this detail.

Another feature of some early Hanks infantry figures is a 'cut-away' base. The reason for the shaped base is not known with certainty, however the most likely reason is that the figures were made to fit into a patented Drill Tray, although no frame with a pattern matching the Hanks bases has been identified at this time. Another possibility is that the Hanks

Brothers cast the odd shaped base plate to reduce the amount of lead required to make each figure. On close inspection of these figures, it is clear that they were produced with the base shape in the mould, and the base has not subsequently been cut following production of the figure.

The standard scale used for the majority of Hanks figures was 54mm, as used by Britains. Hanks Brothers also made figures in a full range of other scales. The figures so far identified start as large as 75mm (see the 'cut-away' base Guardsman (2nd from the left), and a later 'W. Sutton' marked Guard figure in the same scale (middle figure)). Others include:



Hanks 1st Lifeguards showing the flat, un-sculpted inner leg of the horses. These are clear copies of Britain's figures. (Author's collection)

<sup>10</sup> Opie, J. *Collecting Toy Soldiers in the 21st Century*. Pen & Sword, Barnsley (2011) Pg.148

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)



A selection of Hanks figures with 'cutaway' bases.  
(Norman Joplin collection)



Hanks B-sized figure compared to standard 54mm scale.  
(Rob Wilson collection)

- 64mm: a 'cut-away' base Guardsman with no markings;
- 60mm scale: Zulus (pictured below)
- 43mm scale 'B-size': Life Guards, Dragoon Guards, and Line Infantry with pre-WWI white Service helmets.

Hanks Brothers' 54mm scale toy soldiers were usually sold as single figures, however their quality figures were sold in boxes of 10 to 12 infantry figures, or 5-6 cavalry figures, the latter often including a trumpeter as well as an officer (see *South Australian Lancers* below).

The trumpeter figure was not offered in the Britains set. These marketing tactics made Hanks' figures attractive competition to W. Britain's boxes, which typically contained only 8 infantry, or 5 cavalry figures.

Another competitive tactic employed by Hanks Brothers was to produce a range of figures that were available with either fixed or movable arm figures based around the 'Pony horse' casting such as those shown in the following images. The range of Hanks cavalry using the 'Pony horse' casting included Hussars, Lancers, Dragoons, Scots Greys and Household Cavalry, as well as Russian and Japanese cavalry.

In contrast also to W. Britain's branded boxes, Hanks' figures appear in a range of different boxes. Early Hanks figures have been identified contained in unbranded boxes



In competition with Britains, a range of Hanks figures using the 'pony horse' casting was available in both a fixed arm and a moveable arm version. (Norman Joplin collection)



Hanks made a wide range of cavalry figures using the 'pony horse' casting. (Rob Wilson collection)

# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)



Hanks Zulus (approx. 60mm) dated from 1912 with a movable arm, marked 'H.Hanks W.Sutton' in an unbranded box. Note only 4 figure slots. A No.109 label, possible export reference, is affixed to the box end. (Norman Joplin collection)



Hanks South Australian Lancers in an unbranded box. The similar Britains figure is the 1896 'slouch hat' version (Set 49). See J. Opie's The Great Book of Britains, Pg36 for a comparison. (Rob Wilson collection)



Hanks Line Infantry figures in an unbranded box. Great value 12 figures box. (Rob Wilson collection)



Hanks Coldstream Guard figures in Gale & Polden 'History & Traditions' illustration box, marked Union Jack Series. (Rob Wilson collection)

with 'Manufactured in London', 'Copyright Models', and 'Movable Arms' also printed on the box top label;

Another unbranded example has 'Soldiers of Greater Britain' with 'Manufactured in London' and 'Movable Arms' also printed on the box top label.

A further example of an unbranded label is that used for the Somerset Light Infantry. This has 'British Soldiers' boxes with 'Made in London, England' also printed on the box top label;

Another series uses the Gale & Polden 'History and Traditions' postcard pictures on boxes marked 'The Union Jack Series of Superior Soldiers (British Made)'. Figures produced by BMC have also appeared in the same style of boxes. Gale & Polden Printers produced the original 'History and Traditions' postcards showing the pictured uniforms and regimental honours between 1909 and 1915 that were later reproduced on the toy soldier box labels. The box labels were likely also printed by Gale & Polden up until 1918 when a fire at their Wellington Works destroyed most of the printer's colour blocks for the History and Tradition images. Therefore, it is thought that the toy soldiers in the History and Tradition picture boxes date from between 1910 and 1918.

The fact that none of the boxes located so far has the name 'Hanks' printed on the labels, and that BMC figures have appeared in the same Gale & Polden 'History and Traditions' picture boxes, strongly suggests a marketing collaboration between the two companies in a further effort to compete with market dominant, now incorporated, Britains Ltd. The toy soldiers were most likely sold un-branded through department



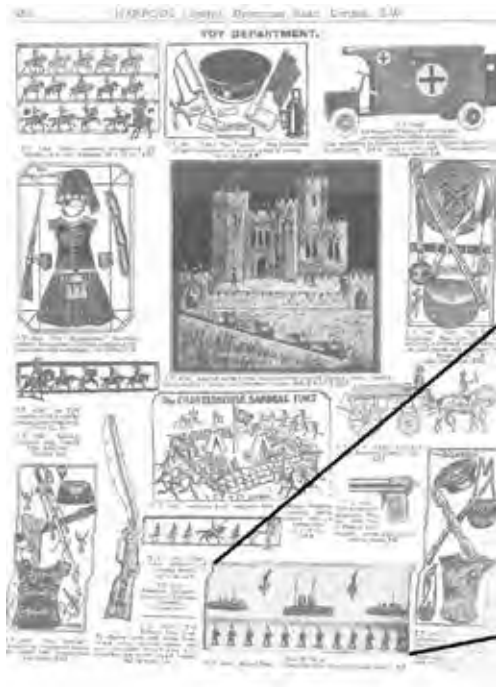
# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)

stores so as not to compete with the store's name. Catalogues from the WWI period for the London department stores Harrods and Gamages illustrate toy soldiers either known to be, or showing characteristics of, Hanks figures.

Mildmay Park, North London onto the list of Toy Makers,<sup>13</sup> rather than Hanks Brothers & Co as the High Court case had referred to the business. By this entry it is reasonable to assume that the supply of Hanks toy soldiers into

its effects, died on 4 May 1905.<sup>14</sup> Orlando Hanks Snr's probate record shows his estate, valued at £2,807 16s., passed to his two sons Orlando Horace Hanks and Albert Edward Hanks, who are both described on the records as *toy manufacturers*.<sup>15</sup>



Hanks 'B' Size Royal Navy Blue Jackets.  
(Norman Joplin collection)



The two brothers, despite their father's demise, clearly devoted themselves to building up the toy soldier manufacture, because in September and October of 1905 a series of at least nine advertisements appeared in the Islington Gazette seeking girls 'used to painting metal soldiers'. However, in contrast to the previous advertisements, this series also records that the Hanks brothers had moved the toy soldier manufacture from their home at 65 Mildmay Park to 37c Mildmay Grove and had named their factory the 'Imperial Works'.<sup>16</sup>

By September and October 1902, it seems Hanks Brothers had shrugged off any impacts of W. Britain's lawsuit because a series of three advertisements in the Islington Gazette make it clear that the Hanks family had become a volume manufacturer of toy soldiers. The advertisements were all worded '*Girls wanted, used to Metal Soldier Painting. Apply (basement) 65 Mildmay Pk Ball's Pond rd.*'<sup>12</sup> At this time the production was still taking place in their family home at 65 Mildmay Park, North Islington.

The 1905 London Directory records the entry of 'Orlando Hanks' of 65

the wider British toy market was growing and, while early date marked Hanks figures are yet to be found, the fact that some figures embossed with the Hanks name have been identified shows that the Hanks family did learn from the 1902 court case to protect their own designs.

Unfortunately, Orlando Hanks Snr's time as one of the pioneering British toy soldier manufacturers was short. On 29 April 1905, suffering from a depression apparently brought on from long term debilitating effects of gastritis, Orlando Hanks drank a quantity of carbolic acid and, succumbing to

Again, in 1906, the manufacture of Hanks brothers toy soldiers must have been quite prolific, as evidenced by another series of at least twelve advertisements in both the Islington Gazette and the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette lasting from 4 July to 22 November, all outlining much the same message; '*Girls wanted, used to painting metal soldiers; piece-work; and girls just left school to learn same*'<sup>17</sup> with the final November advertisement seeking a '*box binder wanted (indoors)*' who was clearly required to assist with the packaging of the large quantity of toy soldiers.

Shortly after, in January 1907, production of toy soldiers was evidently constant enough for the

12 Islington Gazette, 30 September, 1 October, 2 October 1902 Pg.6

13 London Trades Directory, 1905

14 The People, 7 May 1905, Pg10

15 England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995

16 Islington Gazette, 18,19,20,26,29 September, and 2,3,5,9 October 1905

17 Islington Gazette / Hackney and Kingsland Gazette 4,6,10,16,17,18,19 July; 15,16 August; and 10, 18 September; 22 November 1906

# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)

Hanks brothers to advertise for 'a woman wanted, used to painting metal soldiers, to take charge of workroom'.<sup>18</sup> In early March an advertisement appeared looking for 'a boy wanted for occasional Barrow to City'<sup>19</sup>, meaning a boy was employed to wheel a barrow load of toys to one of the London street-markets, such as Petticoat Lane, and sell them to the public.

Commencing in January an advertisement appeared in the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette looking for a 'youth, young, used to circular saw' to apply by letter stating their age and the wages they required<sup>22</sup> which was followed in March by 'girls wanted, left school, for light business'<sup>23</sup>, and in April by 'girls wanted, used to cardboard box making'.<sup>24</sup> In May,

of the popularity of either the imported German Steiff company 'growler' teddy bear produced in 1909, or the London made but expensive J. K. Farnell 'Alpha Bears' which first entered onto the market in 1908.

The 1910 London Trades Directory<sup>27</sup> again simply lists *Hanks Brothers* of 37c Mildmay Grove as one of many toy makers and therefore provides no additional information about the partnership's product lines. However, in September 1910 there was a return to advertising for 'respectable girls wanted; used to painting metal soldiers; also young girl (just left school)'<sup>28</sup> albeit that this was a single advertisement.



"Hanks toy soldiers were sold individually at London's street-markets, transported there by barrow like this Costermonger's barrow, made by Britains, which is pictured in their 1901 catalogue. (Norman Joplin collection)

Then in May there are hints that the focus of production at Imperial Works was changing, with an advertisement seeking 'young girls wanted, just left school, to work at home; quick with needle; must live near'<sup>20</sup> giving a slight clue as to what might, in addition to toy soldiers, now be in production. The year 1908 concluded with Orlando Horace Hank's marriage to Minnie Marie Bertha Dannenburg on 20th December at St. Michael and All Angels Church in Walthamstow,<sup>21</sup> followed shortly after by what appears to have been a very busy 1909 for the Hanks brothers and their employees at Imperial Works, 37c Mildmay Grove.

June and September the nature of the activity taking place at Imperial Works suddenly becomes clear with a flurry of advertisements in both the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette and Islington Gazette seeking 'young women, used to Teddy Bear making, constant employment' and lastly in September and October with a more general request for 'girls wanted (just left school), quick with the needle'.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, for a large part of 1909 the production activity at Hanks' Imperial Works shifted from production of toy soldiers to teddy bears instead. The reason for this may have been to take advantage



Hanks Scout figure dated 21.9.1911. Embossed 'H.HANKS' for Horace Hanks, and 'COPYRIGHT' at the edges of the base. (Author's collection)

For more on Hanks scouts see Rob Wilson's Fall 2015 Old Toy Soldier article 'eBay Find – Rare Hanks Bros Boy Scouts with Trek Cart' (Vol39 No.3).



18 Islington Gazette, 9 January 1907

19 Islington Gazette, 5,6 March 1907

20 Islington Gazette, 7 May 1907

21 Registers of Marriages; Registers; Walthamstow, St Michael and All Angels

22 Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 29 January 1909, Pg4

23 Islington Gazette, 16,26 March 1909, Pg6

24 Islington Gazette, 15,19 April 1909, Pg6

25 Islington Gazette / Hackney and Kingsland Gazette 26,27,28,31 May, 2 June,

26 Islington Gazette, 1,2,3,15 September and 4,6 October 1909, Pg6

27 Kelly's London Directory – Trades, 1910 Pg1917

28 Islington Gazette, 8 September 1910, Pg6



# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)

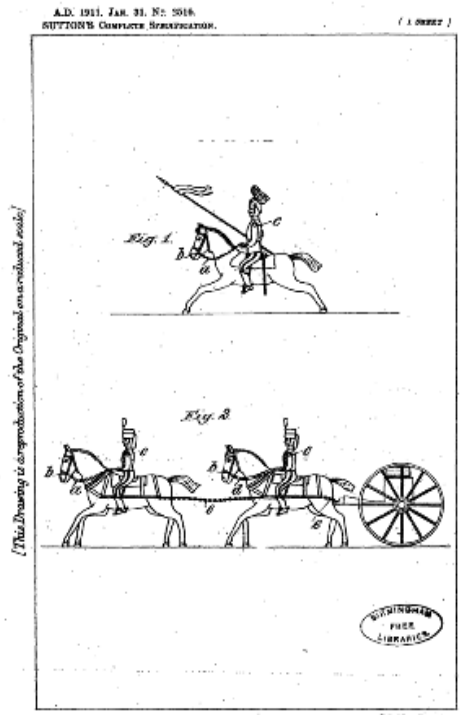
Through 1910 and into 1911 there is certainly no apparent repeat of the frenetic activity of 1909, and the foray into teddy bear making appears never to have been repeated. Perhaps the lack of job advertisements suggests the brothers had a stable workforce and were trading successfully, however the opposite is suspected. Starting around 1908, British workers began to experience growing inflation in the cost of daily living and a corresponding stagnation in their wages, and so began to unionise. The Trade Boards Act of 1909 also began the process of setting minimum wages and conditions, putting pressure on employers to start reducing working hours.

In April 1911, at the time of that year's Census, the records<sup>29</sup> show a married Orlando Horace Jnr. and a single Albert Edward Hanks living with their mother at 65 Mildmay Park and respectively describing their occupations as *Toy Maker and Toy Manufacturer*. At the very same time, living at 56 Londesborough Road, Stoke Newington with his parents, a brother and a sister, is 28-year-old Walter Samuel Sutton, a *Mechanical Engineer (Typewriter)*. Walter Sutton was soon to become an important part of the Hanks toy soldier maker story. Shortly afterwards, in June 1911, a further Hanks advertisement appeared looking for *'girls wanted, used to painting metal soldiers; also learners'*<sup>30</sup> evidencing that the production of toy soldiers did continue throughout this period.

### 'Hanks Bros, & Sutton' Toy Soldier era: 1911 to 1914

On 31 January 1911 Walter Samuel Sutton registered a patent in his own name for several toy soldier figures with flexible horse's reins made of leather. The drawings for patent GB191102516A<sup>31</sup> show a Lancer, similar in style to Britain's early 'plug armed' Lancers, and a Royal Horse Artillery limber and two mounted horses at walk. It is not known whether any toy soldier figures were ever produced with this patented design, but this record demonstrates and dates Sutton's interest in toy soldier manufacture.

The Kelly's London Street Directory for 1912<sup>32</sup>, which was compiled in late 1911 to be printed and published in mid-December 1911, records a sudden change not only in the ownership of the business from *Hanks Brothers* to *Hanks Brothers & Sutton*, but also an apparent expansion. In contrast to 1910, now not only is 37c Mildmay Grove occupied, but so also is 37b Mildmay Grove. Taken



Walter S. Sutton's drawings for patented flexible horse's reins.

together with the 1911 Census, this Directory record enables us to date Walter Sutton's entry into the Hanks Brothers business to be, at latest, November 1911.

By mid-1912 there were already suggestions that the partnership



Naval ships embossed with (LEFT) 'H.HANKS W.SUTTON' and (RIGHT) 'H.HANKS'. (Norman Joplin collection)

29 1911 England Census record

30 Islington Gazette, 14 June 1911, Pg6

31 Copy of patent obtained by Norman Joplin.

32 Kelly's London Directory – Street, 1912 Pg489

# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)

between the Hanks Brothers and Sutton was not working out well. A mounted Dragoon fixed arm figure in Norman Joplin's collection has the words '26.4.12 COPYRIGHT A.E.HANKS' embossed on the horse, while two models of naval ships also in Norman Joplin's collection are embossed, one with 'H. HANKS' and the larger one with 'H.HANKS W.SUTTON' and both are dated 1.12.12.<sup>33</sup>

The 1914 Kelly's Trade Directory<sup>34</sup> (thus representing the situation in late 1913, for the publishing reasons explained above) show another important change. Now Hanks Bros and Sutton are occupying 37c Mildmay Grove, while the directory shows that Albert Edward Hanks is separately operating a business from 37b Mildmay Grove. This establishes that Albert Edward Hanks had now split from the Hanks Brothers business. Again, regrettably, the directory provides no further information about the focus of manufacturing activity at either location at that time.

The year 1914 was momentous for Britain with the outbreak of the Great War, but it was also a significant one for the Hanks brothers.

Firstly, on 9 April 1914, 40-year-old Albert Edward Hanks married Annie Louise Wiltshire at St. Thomas' Church in Trowbridge.<sup>35</sup> Shortly afterwards, in July, the London Gazette<sup>36</sup> announced the dissolution of the partnership between Orlando Horace Hanks and Walter Samuel Sutton, 'under the style or firm of Hanks Bros and Sutton' and reports that the business would be carried on in future solely by Walter Samuel Sutton.

Quite soon after this event Orlando Horace Hanks packed up, left London and settled down in Highcliff, Hampshire, where he and his wife lived out the remainder of their days. Orlando Hanks appears to have had nothing further to do with Hanks Brothers toy soldier manufacture from this point.

### 'Sutton' Toy Soldier era: 1914 to 1918

An advertisement in Games & Toys from October 1914 confirms that the *Hanks Bros & Sutton* business was still located at 37c Mildmay Grove, and then in May 1915 an advertisement in The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader proudly announced that the business had now moved to a 'newly built factory which is situated at 19-27 Millers Terrace, Stoke Newington'. The most interesting information however is shown in the small print on the notice.

*'It is advisable to note that no connection exists between this and any other firm of a similar name.'*

The clear inference is that there was something of a 'toy soldier war' being played out between the two parties; Albert Edward Hanks on one side and Walter Sutton on the other, with both using the name 'Hanks' on their toy soldier product. The 1915-1916 edition of the local Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill, Up & Lower Clapton Trades Directory<sup>38</sup>

**NOTICE** is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us, the undersigned, Orlando Horace Hanks and Walter Samuel Sutton, carrying on business as Toy Manufacturers at 37c, Mildmay-grove, Islington, in the county of London, under the style or firm of "HANKS BROS. AND SUTTON," has been dissolved by mutual consent as from the 24th day of June, 1914. All debts due to and owing by the said late firm will be paid by us, the undersigned, and received by the said Walter Samuel Sutton, on behalf of the said late firm. And such business will be carried on in the future by the said Walter Samuel Sutton.—As witness our hands this 14th day of July, 1914.

ORLANDO HORACE HANKS.  
WALTER SAMUEL SUTTON.

078

Extract from London Gazette, 17 July 1914, announcing dissolution of Hanks Bros and Sutton.

**BRITISH-MADE SOLDIERS**  
Great assortment of Soldiers, PAINTED AND GILT from 4d., 6d and 1s. per box and upwards to any price. Also BOY SCOUTS, ZULUS AND INDIANS.  
Large assortment of  
**METAL NOVELTIES.**  
Wholesale Houses only supplied.  
**Hanks Bros & Sutton**  
37c MILD MAY GROVE, LONDON, N.  
*Telephone 1507 Dalston.*

Games & Toys advertisement, October 1914

33 Norman Joplin Collection

34 Kelly's London Directory – Trade, 1914 Pg1990

35 Wiltshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1916

36 London Gazette, 17 July 1914, Pg5584

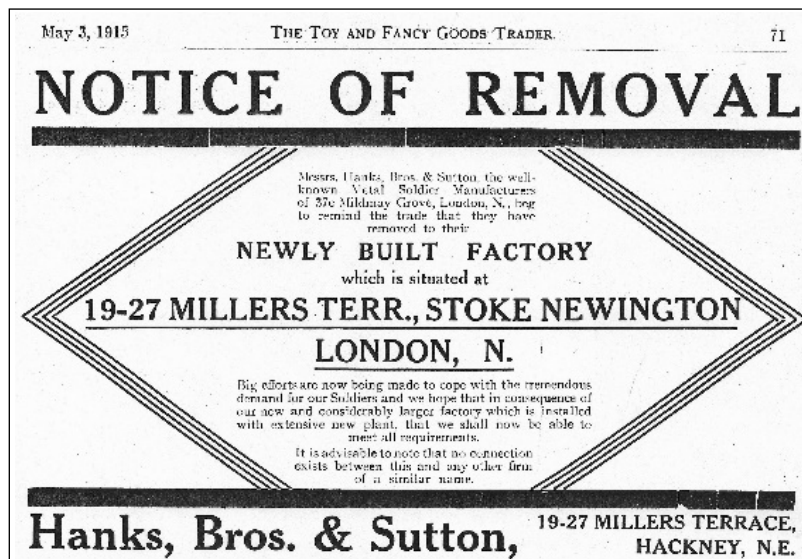
37 England & Wales, Electoral Registers 1832-1932; 1918 record- Archive reference: SPR.Mic.P.17/BL.H.19

38 London, England, City Directories, 1736-1943, London Metropolitan Archives



# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)



The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader, 3 May 1915

demonstrate that the *Hanks Bros & Sutton* business was expanding production and was also gaining attention for the quality of the figures they produced.

Starting with a notice in *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* dated September 1915, the firm states that they are 'very busy but exercising every effort to satisfy our customers requirements'. This was followed by a US advertisement by Chicago Display Import Specialties dated December 1915 which proclaimed the toy soldier figures, which are not specifically named as being made by Hanks, as being 'horses and men are like sculptured – colours academically true – construction like a rock and prices a revelation'. This advertisement is the only one known to display Hanks toy soldier figures, and it should be noted that the figures shown are from the early Hanks Brothers period.

Indeed, Hanks Brothers produced figures especially for the U.S. market. Figures, such as the ones shown in the advertisement, were

shows *Hanks Brothers & Sutton*, toy manufacturers located at Miller's Terrace, and *Hanks, Albert E. metal toy manufacturer* working from 37b Mildmay Grove and 65 Mildmay Park, and it is supposed that this rivalry prompted Walter

Sutton on 26 March 1917 to register the business name '*Hanks Bros & Sutton*'.<sup>39</sup>

Walter Sutton was clearly an entrepreneurial man, as several advertisements from this time



The only known advertisement showing Hanks toy soldier figures. December 1915



Hanks Brothers also produced figures painted in appropriate uniform colours specifically for the U.S. market such as the standard size US infantryman based on the Line Infantry Figure and the B-sized Dragoon painted in US colours. (Rob Wilson collection)

<sup>39</sup> Registration of Business Names certificate 56610, 26 March 1917; certified 25 April 1917

<sup>40</sup> *Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Service Records 1903-1922*. The National Archives of the UK (TNA), Kew, Surrey, England. Series ADM 337

<sup>41</sup> England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995

# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS

## (Continued)

painted in U.S. uniform colours. The range produced for the U.S. included "B-sized" figures.

Another notice dated February 1917 in *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* shows that the firm was producing a range of 'infantry, cavalry and highland regiments' and were still located at the Millers Terrace factory.

Under Walter Sutton the Hanks Brothers & Sutton business had achieved a greater scale of production, improved quality, and evidently lowered the retail cost at the same time. It seems that business was booming for Walter Sutton through this period.

On 30 July 1917 however, 34-year-old Walter Samuel Sutton was called up for service in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (R.N.V.R.) as an Able Seaman. After training at the R.N.V.R. facility HMS Victory VI, the Royal Navy trawler detachment shore establishment HMS Vivid III, and then the Royal Navy's accounting base HMS President III, on 12 June 1918 Walter Sutton was aboard the S.S. *Kul*, which was carrying a cargo of coal from Swansea to Rouen in France, when without warning the ship was torpedoed by the German submarine UB-103 and sunk. Four men of the crew were lost at sea including Walter Samuel Sutton whose body was never recovered.<sup>40</sup> Walter Sutton's probate record shows that he left his estate, worth £2,562 11s. 2d. to his brother, Alfred Sutton, and a Henry McKenzie.<sup>41</sup>

There is nothing to suggest that Alfred Sutton or Henry McKenzie

ever took up the manufacture of toy soldiers under the Hanks Brothers & Sutton brand or any other, so it is assumed that the production of the figures owned by the company, including the figures from the earlier Hanks Brothers period, simply stopped in 1918. This limited production period of Hanks Brothers, and Hanks & Sutton, figures from only 1901 to 1918 is what makes them quite rare.

### 'A.E. Hanks' Toy Soldier era: 1918 to 1922

The local 1919 Kelly's Trade Directory<sup>42</sup> shows that Albert Hanks still maintained his metal toy factory but had relocated back to the factory at 37c Mildmay Grove that he and his brother had originally occupied. The same directory confirms that the Millers Terrace site of the *Hanks Brothers & Sutton* factory was no longer operating, as there is no business listed at that address at this time.



A scout (dated 1911) and a Guardsman (dated 1912) both marked 'A E Hanks'.  
(Norman Joplin collection)

It is probable that while the burst of business expansion for the Hanks toy soldier brand, brought on by marketing and exports to the United States, died with Walter Sutton, there was still a market for Hanks Brothers toy soldiers that Albert endeavoured to supply on his own. Albert had produced his own figures which were solid, economical in form, and likely low-cost figures. In addition to the figures pictured, the previously mentioned fixed arm Dragoon figure marked 'A.E. Hanks' and dated 26.4.12 have so far been identified.

However, despite the obvious economy of his figures, Albert's business struggled in the post-WWI period, because at an as yet unknown date Albert Hanks formed a new partnership with a person named 'Burt', although just who this person is has yet to be determined.

### 'Hanks & Burt' Toy Soldier era: 1922 to 1925

The 1922 Kelly's Trade Directory records the change in the business showing that 37c Mildmay Grove was now occupied by Hanks & Burt Limited, metal toy manufacturers.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps one reason for the need to form a new partnership was that Albert Hanks was increasingly unable to run the toy soldier business on his own. Unfortunately, during this period Albert required hospitalisation from the effects of a mental illness, and on 19 May 1925 while home 'on leave' from the hospital he hung himself from the staircase bannister. His wife, Annie Hanks, was quoted as saying

<sup>42</sup> London, England, City Directories, 1736-1943, London Metropolitan Archives

<sup>43</sup> London, England, City Directories, 1736-1943, London Metropolitan Archives

<sup>44</sup> The Daily Telegraph, Sat 23 May 1925, Pg18

<sup>45</sup> Death certificate of Albert Edward HANKS, General Register Office, cert. DYA 645204.

<sup>46</sup> England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995



# HANKS BROTHERS TOY SOLDIER MANUFACTURERS (Continued)

that she had been going to 'apply for his discharge from the mental hospital because he had seemed so much better'.<sup>44</sup>

Albert Hank's death certificate confirms his cause of death as *asphyxia from hanging suicide while of unsound mind*, but also confirms that his last occupation was still as a *toy manufacturer*.<sup>45</sup> Hanks left an estate valued at £5,104 18s. 1d. to his wife Annie Louise Hanks.<sup>46</sup>

## Hanks & Burt Ltd era: 1926 to 1939

A review of the Toy Makers listed in Kelly's Trade and Street Directories shows *Hanks & Burt Ltd* recorded as continuing to occupy 37c Mildmay Grove from 1926 through to 1928, then as *Hanks Ltd. (Metal)* in 1932 through to 1939. In the 1940s the Mildmay Grove address is occupied by *W.H. Morgan & Co*, metal workers, and *Hanks Ltd.* is no longer listed either as a toy maker, a toy dealer or a toy importer.

It is not known whether manufacture of Hanks toy soldiers continued in this period, but the Hanks name ceased to be associated in any way with toys in 1939.



## Summary

There were two peaks in the production of the Hanks brand of toy soldiers through these six phases, the first between 1906 and 1908 and the second, under Walter Sutton, between 1911 and 1918.

It is quite probable that during the period 1912 to 1918, *Hanks* toy soldiers were appearing on the market which were produced separately by Hanks Brothers & Sutton, and also by A.E. Hanks.

Marking characteristics on the figures therefore fall into the following broad descriptions for each era:

### 1. 'Hanks Brothers' Toy Soldier era: 1901 to 1911

Initially there were no markings on Hanks figures. From approximately 1903 some figures were marked (see Line Infantryman simply marked 'H. Hanks'). By 1911 figures appear marked with the Hanks name, the date of the moulding, and the word 'COPYRIGHT'. The earliest dated figure identified is the 'H.HANKS' Boy Scout for the Trek Cart.

### 2. 'Hanks Bros, & Sutton' Toy Soldier era: 1911 to 1914

Examples of figures that have been identified from this period with markings show:

- (i) 'A.E.HANKS'  
– Standing Boy Scout with pole, Guardsman, Dragoon
- (ii) 'H.HANKS'  
– Naval ship
- (iii) 'H.HANKS W.SUTTON'  
– Naval ship, Mounted Indian, Zulus

### 3. 'Sutton' Toy Soldier era: 1914 to 1918

- 'W.SUTTON'  
– Guardsman at slope

### 4. 'A.E. Hanks' Toy Soldier era: 1918 to 1922

- No figures are identified to have been dated as first produced in this period.

### 5. 'Hanks & Burt' Toy Soldier era: 1922 to 1925

- No marked figures are identified to have been first produced in this period.

### 6. Hanks & Burt Ltd era: 1926 to 1939

- No marked figures are identified to have been first produced in this period.

It is reasonable to suggest then that, with Walter Sutton's tragic death in 1918, and the subsequent cessation of production under the Hanks Brothers & Sutton brand following WWI, there was a sudden void in the market. The newly emerging competitor, John Hill & Co., was quite ready to expand into the space.

*Acknowledgment: I would like to thank Norman Joplin for his guidance, knowledge, resources and assistance in preparing this article, and for Norman's and Rob Wilson's contribution of photographs of figures in their collections to illustrate the points of interest.*

**Richard Forrester**  
March 2021

## Author's Biography

Richard lives in the regional Australian city of Bendigo. As a boy he enjoyed playing with the Airfix 1/72 scale range of plastic toy soldier figures and it was not until the 1990s that he began to collect lead figures. Having brought together a 'magpie' collection of figures by Britains, Johillco, Crescent and others, he is now specialising in collecting early non-Britains figures. A love for socio-economic history has led him to combine the two interests into researching the lives and the times of the turn of the 20th Century British toy soldier makers. Richard says, "By coming to know the people who designed and manufactured these wonderful toys, I have a greater appreciation and enjoyment for collecting their figures."

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# RECONNAISSANCE

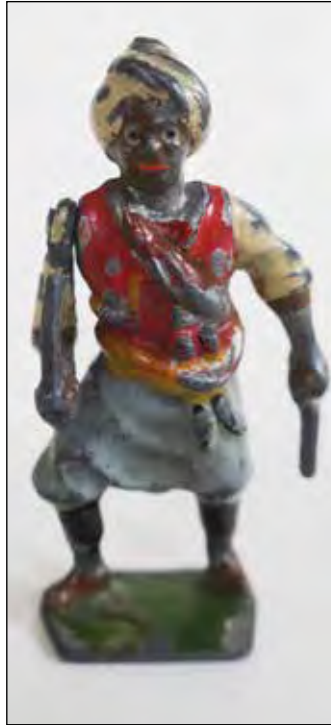
## *Britains "Bandit" captured at last*

When Phillips auctioned an extremely rare set of Paris Office pirates in their sale of June 1989 they were regarded with some skepticism by many collectors. They seemed to be too good to be true. Virtually mint !

A while later the original master surfaced amongst the set of moulds and related material from the Britain's factory, supposedly one of a number of moulds transferred when the French Factory was closed down in 1925.

Many remained skeptical. Perhaps this was just a cunning by an ex Britains employee to create a rarity

The topic was discussed further in an earlier issue of this magazine - "Britains Corsairs—Indian Bandit" vol36, no 4, p60-61.



Since then, as far as I am aware no other examples of the figure have been seen nor sold at public auction - until now!

Unheralded and unidentified, part of a large lot containing Britains, CBG and other makers figures, mostly in damaged condition a lot in a French provincial sale sold for just 60 Euros plus commission. Hidden amongst the dross was the figure shown in the accompanying image.

I had my doubts that the figure was ever sold in France - I speculated that maybe some one had run off a few castings from the moulds they had acquired when the Paris Office closed and passed them off as originals.

This image confirms that Britains must have sold at least a few in France, possibly just before the factory was closed down.

## *Heyde or is it Noris?*



Recently sold on eBay and described as Heyde, this magnificent Scots Grey measured just over 6" tall to the top of his headdress. According to Gisbert Freber, who is in the process of preparing a book on the subject, this is in fact an early figure by one of Heyde's main competitors in Germany, Heinrich using the trade name Noris. The horse is hollow, but cast in two halves, which have been soldered together. The figure was also cast in a number of parts, including details such as his plume.

## *Feix or Heyde?*

This group of hollowcast 54mm size US Dragoons was acquired by the editor a couple of years ago, and catalogued as Feix. However, a similar set, but also including infantry figures, still tied into the base of the original box, appeared on Ebay last year. These were described as by Heyde. I decided to approach Markus Grein, whose excellent book on Heyde many of our readers will be familiar with. Markus was in no doubt. Yes, this is a set by Heyde, the drummer and some other features being particularly distinctive.



The next photo shows the eBay set, still tied to the remains of the original box. The additional images below show some of the same castings but painted in German uniforms.

So, it looks like my early Hollowcast group of Dragoons was made by Heyde rather than Feix! I wonder how many other collectors have similarly misidentified sets?

# RECONNAISSANCE (Continued)



Photos of Markus's Heyde figures, with German paint finishes

Markus supplied the following information and additional images. The figures are Heyde size 1C Hollowcast and the box is a No. 416 with American soldiers. Typical for Heyde is the soldered sabre for the cavalry and the rifle for the infantry. Readers can find other interesting information on the Website managed by Markus and Norbert Eckes: [www/alters-spielzeug.info](http://www/alters-spielzeug.info)

You have to register to see all the pictures and get the information on Heyde and other toy figures.



## SR b-sized Artillery Display



Another recent find, courtesy of Ged Haley, was this rare 4 row boxed set by SR. SR's standard size artillery pieces are relatively common, being sold directly by that French company. But they were also used by a number of other makers to enhance their range of figures, without have to go to the expense of tooling up to make these complex pieces of equipment. The accompanying figures, and original packaging are much less common than the guns, especially in the smaller scale. These b-sized figures make a great display. They are probably intended to represent the British (or maybe Belgian) army, in khaki service dress. They are equipped with the famous French 75mm gun, which was also used by the US Army in the Great War. Unfortunately the plain red original box offers no clues as to exactly what the makers intended to portray. The full set comprises two 4-horse teams, one drawing the 75mm gun, the other an ammunition caisson, plus two rows of 4 mounted gunners.



# ***“JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT”***

## **NOTES FROM AN INTERVIEW BY THE EDITOR WITH BILL O'BRIEN AND JOE DEMARCO ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO MAKE THEIR SPECIAL FIGURES**

*Photos by Joe DeMarco*

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While many individuals have enjoyed amassing toy armies through the collecting of toy soldiers, both antique and new, few have enjoyed the challenge, satisfaction and sense of accomplishment of creating their own unique toy figures. The following chronicles the different paths that Joe DeMarco and Bill O'Brien have pursued in the creation of toy figures. Both in their late '70's, they grew up playing with toy soldiers and have seen the hobby change dramatically within the past 50 years. From back yard battles with BB guns and fire-crackers, to military miniatures, from lead to plastic, from wargaming, to individual connoisseur figures and the introduction of numerous new toy soldier manufactures, the interest in toy soldiers has experienced major transformations. Joe and Bill are two of those who consider themselves fortunate for having experienced this evolution and navigating a path that has provided challenge, enjoyment and accomplishment.



**Picture 1: Bill working on the creation of a column representing US cavalry, infantry and artillery during the Spanish American War. All figures are original Britain's and the historical reference is paintings by Henry Ogden the foremost artist of US military uniforms.**

With a combined collecting experience of over 100 years, they each have been creating toy figures for over 45 years. Although their paths only crossed 7 years ago, they share a common bond in the concept, historical accuracy, design

and production of toy soldiers. Their service within the Army and Navy respectively is also reflected in the respect for the history, traditions and self discipline learned during military service. The following account describes their independent progression and how each pursued a different approach in their interest and techniques in creating unique toy figures.

Joe, a native of NJ, spent his professional career in various position within the Bell System. His initial interest in toy soldiers began as a boy of five when they were available in 5 and 10 Stores like Woolworth and Kresge. The love of aviation began with the gift of a balsa wood kit of a German WW I fighter plane. Christmas always included as many art supplies as toys. He loved drawing from an early age and lost his amateur standing as an artist at age eight when he traded his battle scene drawings for Britain's toy soldiers. When he reached his 30's with his career in place and family started, Joe returned to aircraft models and toy soldiers. He began writing and designing models for several hobby magazines. Later he developed a freelance artist business that lasted over 30 years.

Joe loved painting military miniatures for relaxation. He later expanded into collecting 54 mm toy soldiers. The glossy, jewel like, look was captivating. Not in a position to buy collectible Britain's he learned the skills to make molds and cast his own.

Tack on about 10 years and a visit to the Forbes museum in New York and Joe was introduced to the world of toy boats. While financially out of reach, Joe turned to his design and wood working abilities and began making model gunboats and small ships for both himself and collectors. The first two projects provided the testing ground. Joe retained one and the other is in the Bob Walker collection. As interest expanded, Joe made a small fleet and brought them to display at the Valley Forge, PA show in the early 90's.

While born in Brooklyn, Bill spent his early years on the Eastern end of Long Island. His first toy soldiers were hollow cast figures made by William Britain's. Hollanders, a small toy store in Brooklyn, FAO Schwartz and Polks Hobby store in NYC were his source of those treasured "red boxes". Upon graduation from Norwich University, with a degree in history and a commission as a 2/LT in the US Army, the soldiers were secured in the attic.

Upon leaving active duty, Bill began a career of service as an administrative officer at Princeton University, Vice President of Health Policy Institute and as a Senior Strategic Advisor assisting individuals in navigating the transitions in their lives. As an avid duck hunter, the making of working

## “JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT” (Continued)

duck decoys became his creative outlet. He experimented with natural cork, Jersey “swamp cedar” and solid pine blocks. After painting exact patterns of field marks, each piece had to undergo sea trials to determine how it floated and actually attracted ducks on the wing.

It wasn't until 1975, while at a flea market, that he picked up a Britain's toy figure which rekindled his interest in toy figures. It was a female equestrian and had a big hole in the side of the horse. The sticker shock of the existing prices of toy soldiers was enough to get him into the mind set of repair and restoration. 1975 marked the end of his “wood” period and inaugurated his passion for the repair, restoration and conversion of old toy figures.

The early years were spent building a collection of traditional Britain's sets through repair and restoration. This was the late 70's when the toy soldier market was on the rise and with each passing year the prices of antique toy figures increased. Once considered toys to be played with, the proliferation of Toy Soldier shows - Chicago, Dallas, West Coaster and East Coast and international auction houses such as Phillips and Christie's a new wave of collectors invaded the hobby. The gold standard for this period was “mint in the Box” to which Bill replies “can't play with soldiers still tied in the box”. With this increase in demand, the investment / entrepreneurial aspect entered the realm of the toy soldier market. In response to this interest and demand, a host of new toy soldier companies emerged. This period was also characterized by the impersonal “transaction” of acquiring figures through shows and auctions. Joe and Bill agree that the addition of “home grown” toy figures within their collections represents a much more personal experience.

Joe and Bill share a common interest in the outcome of the finished product, but their approaches are uniquely different. Bill's paint preferences are mineral based while Joe's is acrylic based. Their painting styles are different too. While Joe's mold making expertise enables him to cast figures and small parts, Bill relies on a jeweler's saw and the cannibalization of damaged hollow cast figures for small parts necessary to maintain their “repo depot” inventories for replacements. They both focus on restoring old Britain's or similar toy soldiers. While Joe is not adverse to including more solid cast figures to restore or convert, Bill sticks to original hollow cast figures.

The timing of these events led both Joe and Bill to concentrate on creating their own troops through conversion. Neither bothered to design a special box or sign figures. Gradually their interests moved in the direction of making figures that were not produced commercially by the established makers. Conversion ruled the day. A different head, a new arm and a revised paint pattern worked to create a new toy soldier in the old tradition and scale. An appreciation of military history and historical accuracy in the portrayal of uniforms and equipment was documented in books

and literature that grew into reference libraries. From these texts, the ideas for new creations and conversions emerged.



**Picture 2: Joe and Bill studying reference books while considering the various uniform paintings that are possible for the Spanish American War figures. In the background is Joe's western diorama based on Britain's and Marx figures.**

With no guide books or instruction manuals to follow, each applied the trial and error approach to developing their modeling techniques. For each, there was no outsourcing. All steps – idea, design, sculpting, assembly and painting were done by one pair of hands. Bill works exclusively with hollow cast figures. He mentions the special significance of working with some castings that are



**Picture 3: Joe DeMarco working on some solid cast figures. Boxes of spare parts are in the background.**



## ***“JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT” (Continued)***

marked with dates of 1901, 1903 and 1907. These little lead men have survived over 100 years as toys and the scrap drives of 2 World Wars. Joe works with more recent hollow cast figures and casts solid figures from silicone molds. Joe's main focus is on the Imperial countries of 1880 – 1939. Bill's historical theme is nearly identical, featuring Armies of the World from 1880 to 1917.

They both consider themselves folk artists. As independent creators of historically accurate and original toy figures, neither copied other makers nor competed with others. The competition was confined within themselves – always trying to make a better figure which was worthy of joining the line of march in their expanding collections. “Good enough for government work” was not an acceptable axiom. This non-commercial approach also insured that each piece was done to a standard that would qualify it for inclusion within their personal collections. Bill recalls being critiqued on his Foxhunting figures by actual participants in the Hunt, who pointed out discrepancies in the color of his horses and hounds. One can see how he adapted these suggestions within his later versions.



**Picture 4: These are the basic tools the Joe uses for converting and restoring 54 mm figures**

Each adhered to the rule of “one in one out” which insured not being overrun by displays that could engulf a home. The “shelf life” criteria was used for determining what passed muster and stayed on display. Over the course of collecting some items retain their appeal while others fade. Ask yourself, what is the first thing you look at when visiting your collection? Does it recall a story on how it was acquired? What makes it special? While imposing discipline to the size and display of a collection, application of the shelf life criteria conveys a personal theme to their collections.

"How long did it take you to make that?" An interesting question that reveals much more than "how much is it worth"? Finding the time necessary to create original figures was always a challenge. The demands of family, work and everyday living necessitated careful planning for projects. The balancing of time constraints required individual focus, concentration and determination. Small boxes of "works in progress" were often taken on trips or vacations to be worked on in spare moments. Another aspect of this pursuit of creativity which is often overlooked, was the distraction and relief it brought to stress during difficult times. An immersion in a craft can temporarily relieve the stress of the day. Both have acknowledged how important their work has contributed to *enjoying* their retirements.

Since the figures created were not for commercial purposes, it allowed Joe and Bill to decide what to make rather than chase what was selling. They admit to trading their work for castings, repairing a damaged figure or touching up a fallen warrior in order to sustain their inventories. With the decline in shows, or an occasional flea market find, Ebay has become the source of last resort.

Given the march of time and their longevity, it is only now that many of their original pieces are entering the world of the online auctions, where their monetary value will be determined by future generations of toy soldier enthusiasts.

Rather than be driven by the adage of “who with the most wins” both consider the recognition and appreciation of their creations as their lasting legacy within the realm of the toy soldier

### Selected images of Joe and Bill's work

**1. Polish Lancers 1939 from converted Cherilea lancers. Note the addition of head, lance, and horse's tails. An original Cherilea lancer is shown for comparison. DeMarco**



## ***“JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT” (Continued)***

2. Indian Mountain Artillery based on the Britain's set that uses mules. These are all solid cast figures. DeMarco



3. The evolution of saving a toy soldier. The original was bought without its base. the figure was stripped of paint and a new base was provided. An Imrie/Risley musket was added. It was primed, and painted in flat acrylic paint. The final touch was to gloss the figure. DeMarco



4. This set of a US Army horse drawn artillery team followed a photo Joe saw on the internet. The horses and outrider are restored Britain's. The limber and 75mm cannon are solid cast. DeMarco



5. A restoration using a set of hollow cast Britain's US Cavalry. New heads, arms and a flag were added. With this conversion a whole new colorful set was made. DeMarco





## ***“JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT” (Continued)***

6. This is a USMC Color Guard, circa 1900. Researching the internet can be rewarding. Joe found a photo and was inspired to make this set. DeMarco



8. Common French made George Munckle cavalry figures. They have been repainted as colorful French Spahis. O'Brien



7. An assortment of hollow cast civilian figures converted to fishermen. The fishing tackle is made from telephone wire. Each fish is hand cast in lead. O'Brien



9. French castings by Charles Silvester reworked to depict WW I French cavalry in horizon blue uniforms. O'Brien



## ***“JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT” (Continued)***

10. Restoration and new painting of Britain's castings to create a one of a kind Mounted Band of the 17th Lancers. It took untold hours to complete this set. O'Brien



11. Rare, large scale, Noris of Germany figures that have been restored and painted as British Line Infantry. A common 54 mm Britain's figure is shown for comparison. O'Brien



12. This is the bones of Bill's latest project. An assortment of Britain's figures has been stripped of all paint. Cavalry, Infantry, and medical units will form a column of American troops in the Spanish American War. O'Brien





# LETTERS & READER'S MESSAGES

## More on the New York Regiment



In the Summer 2020 issue (volume 44, no. 2) I reported on some nice Beiser sets in Gray uniforms that had been sold on eBay. I speculated that they might be intended to represent the New York Regiment. OTS magazine contributor, Bill Nutting wrote in to dispute that possibility. Bill writes:

*"I've looked at the Beiser figures and sets off and on over the past 35 years. I looked at a lot of the early ads and of course the patents – and was involved with Richard O'Brien and others in some of the early sorting out of the figures and the company.*

*I would say we should keep Britians sets 148 and 149 discrete and separate. I'm sure your gray figures were never used in 149, so I wouldn't think of the gray or other figures as a "version" or a "variation on set #149."*

*As for whether the gray uniforms are militia I've generally thought of the militia as late nineteenth century. That was certainly the heyday – with great parades, illustrations, etc. – and by the Militia Act of 1903 these colorful local regiments were on their way out. Again, I'm not an expert, but I think that's the basic storyline. I think the nice German-made sets of 7th Regiment, 22d Regiment, etc. would date before the Beiser board hinged set era. Given all this, I don't think the gray Beiser figures would be "New York State Militia." Again that's my conclusion just thinking about things – but I don't know for sure. I do probably need one day to look through the ASC sets I have to look again for any labeled "Volunteers" or "Militia."*

*One "fun fact" you could have added was that the 7th Regiment Armory – now just called the Park Avenue Armory -- at 643 Park Avenue is where Ray Haradin sets up his toy soldier sales booth in the winter antiques show in New York City each year.*

*One typo – in your first reference to the company you mislabeled it "American Toy Soldier Company." Should be just "American Soldier Company."*

*All in all lots of good commentary and photos."*

Since then a number of other examples of figures in these Gray uniforms have turned up on eBay and in auctions, see the next three images. A number of these have been attributed to Noris and probably date to the 19th rather than 20th century. The photos show 60mm Heyde or Noris figures at the slope plus large scale mounted and foot figures that have been sold in recent auctions.

If any other readers can throw further light on precisely which regiments these figures were intended to portray please do get in touch.

## Segal New South Wales Lancer

Norman Joplin, wrote in to comment on Bill Anderson's piece on New South Wales Lancers. Bill showed a picture of two slightly different versions of Philip Segal's model, one on a circular and one on a larger, oval base. Both were in a relaxed pose and empty handed. Norman had found another variation, this time holding a rifle by his side. The new figure, although in the same style and almost certainly the work of the same sculptor, is a quite different casting, with his cross belt off the right shoulder rather than the ammunition pouches shown in the versions in Bill's article, which are off the left shoulder.



# LETTERS & READER'S MESSAGES (Continued)

## Further thoughts on the WWI gunboat reported in the May issue

Will Beierwaltes wrote in to comment about the Reconnaissance article about the patrol boat. *"I agree is is most likely a commercial production item, if only very limited. I also agree that it probably was originally staffed by johillco sailors . However, it has to have been produced post-war because it refers to World War 1, which before WWII was only referred to as "the Great War". It could not have been World War 1 if there had not yet been a World War 2. Thus, my guess is an early post war product using available materials (and figures) to try and develop an income stream. Regardless, it is a really neat model."*

## PARK TOYS FORT SIOUX - Comments on Allen Hickling's article on US Forts

Robert Waterhouse wrote in on this topic:

*"Dear Editor,*

*I was already enjoying Allen Hickling's article "British Toy Forts of the Wild West" (V44, no. 4) when the photo of the Park Toys fort from 1970 catapulted me back to childhood.*

*I looked at every other photo but could not have been more certain: mine was the Park Toys 1970 model, which makes sense as according to Hickling's dating I would have been about 7 years old when it was issued. The photo evoked the particular challenge posed by the watch towers: it was tricky to get figures through the gaps, so the 7th Cavalry would just slip from your fingers. The ledges around the tops of the walls were too narrow for figures' bases, and the buildings were dark recesses in which figures would just fall over; then you'd have to lie on your belly and stretch your fingers to set them right again, which was fiddly and annoying. The flag, though impressive to look at, was too stiff to be convincing and the little pulley soon stopped working.*

*I knew all the fort's flaws intimately because I loved it.*

*The Timpo Indians in the picture brought back memories, too. The hard curve behind the chief's headdress provided a fascinating, tactile experience of the concave and I can now tell you that if you shove chewing gum in there, bits of it will remain long after you've tried scraping it out with a pencil. The little fire with its pots and pans and the squaw (as she was then authoritatively identified by English adults who had not yet learned better) seemed in strangely domestic contrast to the fierce braves and cavalry soldiers who usually peopled a scene with the fort, and the Timpo stagecoach wouldn't make it through the little wooden doors.*

*But it was a wonderful addition to the world of play, and was no doubt a special Christmas present.*

*Hickling's article and the photo of the fort brought back so many memories of my childhood bedroom that I was reminded*

*even of the view of the tree outside, the mysterious chatter of the adults downstairs, and the contented loneliness of playing with toy figures. All in all, I enjoyed article immensely and am grateful to Allen Hickling for writing it."*

Bill Nutting also enjoyed Allen's article and sent in pictures of his own set, including its original box.



## Pails and other Tales

While on a western theme!

David Farnsworth wrote in to ask - *"Have you wondered whether there is a specific reason that a pail is hanging from the rear axle of the prairie schooner in Britains' sets 2023, 2032, and 2042? I have, especially because the schooner has no other household goods. The mystery may be partly solved, at least with respect to the use of a pail in that position, on page 67 of Jim Kjelgaard's book The Lost Wagon (Dodd, Mead & Company, 1955). There, an old timer gives the following advice to someone about to enter the Oregon Trail: "Hang the morning's milking in a pail behind the wagon. By night it'll be butter. Drink the evening's milk."*





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# HOWARD FRANCIS WILLETTS AND MATCHLOCK MILITARY MODELS

*By Will Beierwaltes*

Born in 1905, Howard Francis Willetts (see photo 1) had a long career in the military, civil service and engineering until 1947, when health issues prompted him to convalesce and ultimately to retire in 1950. He had always had an interest in military pageantry, and during his convalescence he turned to interests in military history and painting. He had collected toy soldiers since 1914, and his retirement provided him time to expand upon these interests and led him to try making his own figures.



Howard Francis Willetts, about 1965

This led to the establishment of "Matchlock Military Miniatures", which was a limited range of 120 mm (7 inch) British military figures produced in plaster. Limited commercial production began in 1954 in St. Ives, Huntingdon, U.K. While he did all the research on the uniforms and historical background, and had developed certain skills in the sculpting and painting, he employed a master mold-maker and caster named Joseph Grassi to help him produce and to paint this limited range of figures. Production was limited to only these two individuals and an additional painter, T. Allen, working on all aspects of the models.

Originals were first sculpted in clay from Willetts' drawings, from which eventually a master was produced that would be used to produce a mold. Similar to the German composition figures of Lineol and Elastolin, prior to casting a wire armature was placed within the mold over which the plaster would be poured to give additional

strength to the body and particularly the appendages. The figure was cast using a strong and fine commercial grade plaster and sealed using a lacquer coat to reduce chipping and give a base for the finishing coat of paint. Very similar to (and often mistaken for) the early plaster 120 mm models of Sentry Box, the painting was done using primarily flat colors and no shading or other highlights. The painting of the faces on Willetts figures is particularly unique with much character, and an excellent way to identify them (see photo 2). Accessories such as (tin) swords, belts and cap lines and additional details were then added by hand to complete the model.

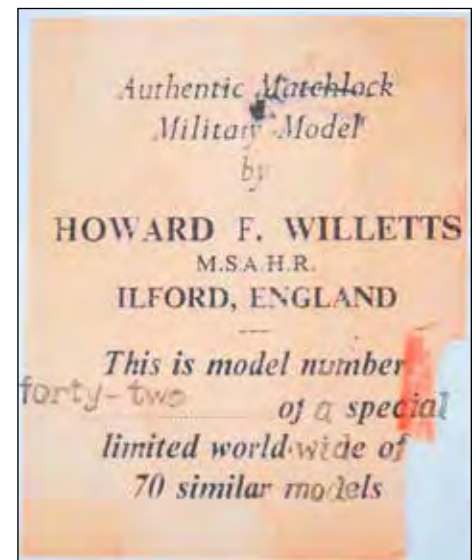


Example of the face painting of a Willetts figure

Similar to the Sentry box figures, these large-scale portraits were not meant to be toy soldiers, but rather "connoisseur figures" for the military collector or the individual from a particular regiment. The painting was of an excellent quality for its era, but pales compared to the military miniatures produced today. Thus, the Willetts figures are most commonly found in the collections of toy soldier enthusiasts today. Every sculpted figure was unique and limited to a production run of 70, after which the master was destroyed. Dissimilar to the Sentry Box figures, Willetts figures were never produced in metal. The figures are most often identified by being cast with a small square (plaster) grey base (1 ¾ x 1 ¾ x ¼") that is then mounted on a (usually black) wooden plinth 2 ½ x 2 ½ x ¾").

Willetts seems to have never used

an identifying label on the plinth or casting, but the figures did come with a small receipt/document (about 2x2 inches) giving the regiment's name and the production number of that particular casting (see photo 3). The figures are often found with a label on the plinth, but these are varied and typically something an owner has added. Likewise, the country of origin was not identified on the figure or base suggesting he only sold to a limited domestic market. It is likely Willetts figures were sold by mail order, though "Willetts Authentic Models of British Regiments" appear in the Hummel's Catalog of the mid-1960's. The catalog states that Willetts are "exclusive" to Hummel's (as a retail outlet). Foot figures were sold at 60 Shillings, Highlanders and Lowlanders (with painted tartans) were 80 Shillings and Pipers sold for 100 Shillings. No mounted figures are listed in the catalog.



An example of a Willetts receipt/document of authenticity that accompanied the figure

The name Matchlock was also used by R. Britton Riviere (another British Model Soldier Society member) for a line of 54 mm plaster military figures, which caused some tension between him and Willetts. However, the Riviere line was not successful, and ultimately folded into his association with the early production of Sentry Box plaster figures, leaving Willetts the name for his line. However, most collectors refer to his figures as "Willetts."

# HOWARD FRANCIS WILLETTS AND MATCHLOCK MILITARY MODELS *(Continued)*

Willetts also produced some exceptional mounted figures in the same scale. Horses were produced walking or standing, with the head up or down. Production was similar to the foot figures, though considerably more complicated (as might be expected). Generally, the horse legs do not age well as they are thin compared to the bulk of the horse. As with the foot figures, each casting was cast with its own (plaster) grey base thru which the wire armature passed down from the body, which was then attached on to a wooden plinth. Like German

composition figures, the plaster over wire model is susceptible to cracking and chipping if exposed to moisture, and the figures are often found with cracks or missing pieces of limbs if they have not been properly cared for.

The Willetts catalog included uniforms of the British Empire from 1900 until the 1960's. Preference seems to have been given to officers over enlisted troop uniforms. While production commenced in 1954, Willetts slowly ceased production between 1970 and 1974, after which he retired

completely. John Garrett, in his book "Model Soldiers; an Illustrated History" lists the following subjects for which Willetts made models to which a number of additions have been included. This is only a partial catalog. It appears that some of these models were made as custom orders (such as the two American models or the Air Training Cadets), and probably done in much shorter runs because of limited appeal. No complete catalog is known at this time, but the Hummel catalog suggests there are some 95 figures available in the complete series.



Portrait figure of HRH the Prince of Wales (next to a typical Britains figure for scale)



British Field Marshal in full Dress (Courtesy Neil Rhodes, DC Toy Soldier Shop)



Guards Drum Major in State Dress (Courtesy OTS Auctions)



Pipe Major of the Gordon Highlanders (Courtesy OTS Auctions)



Portrait figure of Bonnie Prince Charlie (Courtesy OTS Auctions)



Royal Inniskilling Drum Major (Courtesy OTS Auctions)



Mounted Queen Elizabeth as Colonel-in-Chief (Courtesy OTS Auctions)



# HOWARD FRANCIS WILLETTS AND MATCHLOCK MILITARY MODELS (Continued)



Queens Own Hussars  
(Courtesy OTS Auctions)



42nd highlander Black  
Watch Piper  
(Courtesy OTS Auctions)



Prince Phillip as Admiral  
of the Royal Navy  
(Courtesy OTS Auctions)



British 12th Lancer in  
relaxed pose  
(Courtesy Neil Rhodes, DC  
Toy Soldier Shop)

## H.F. Willetts Matchlock Foot figures included:

Regiments of the British Army, including;  
Drum Majors  
Scottish Pipers  
The Royal Air Force  
The Royal Navy  
Honourable Artillery Company  
Yeomen of the Guard  
The Royal Marines  
Royal Scots Fusiliers  
South Wales Borderers  
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry  
Middlesex Regiment  
South Lancashire Regiment  
Seaforth Highlanders  
12th Royal Lancers  
Middlesex Yeomanry  
Air Training Cadets (used as a trophy)

Also, several regiments of the  
Indian Army, including  
Jaipur State Forces  
8th Punjab Regiment  
9th Deccan Horse  
1st Maharaja Holker's Infantry

Several North American models were  
also produced (though probably in  
more limited numbers) which included:  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Princess Patricia's Canadian  
Light Infantry  
Kings Point Merchant Marine  
Academy (USA)

## Valley Forge Military Academy (USA)

Besides the typical regimentals,  
several portrait figures were also  
produced, including:  
A portrait figure of HRH the Duke  
of Windsor or Prince of Wales  
A portrait figure of Prince Phillip as  
Admiral of the Fleet, Royal Navy  
A portrait figure of a Field Marshal  
in full dress  
A portrait figure of Bonnie Prince  
Charlie  
A portrait figure of King Charles the  
First

## The Matchlock/Willetts Mounted figures included:

British Regimental Cavalry including  
Lancers  
Hussars  
Dragoons  
Royal Horse Artillery  
Royal Scots Greys  
Mounted officers of the Highland  
Regiments  
An (out of character)  
And a portrait figure of Queen  
Elizabeth mounted as Colonel-in-  
Chief in a Guards Uniform

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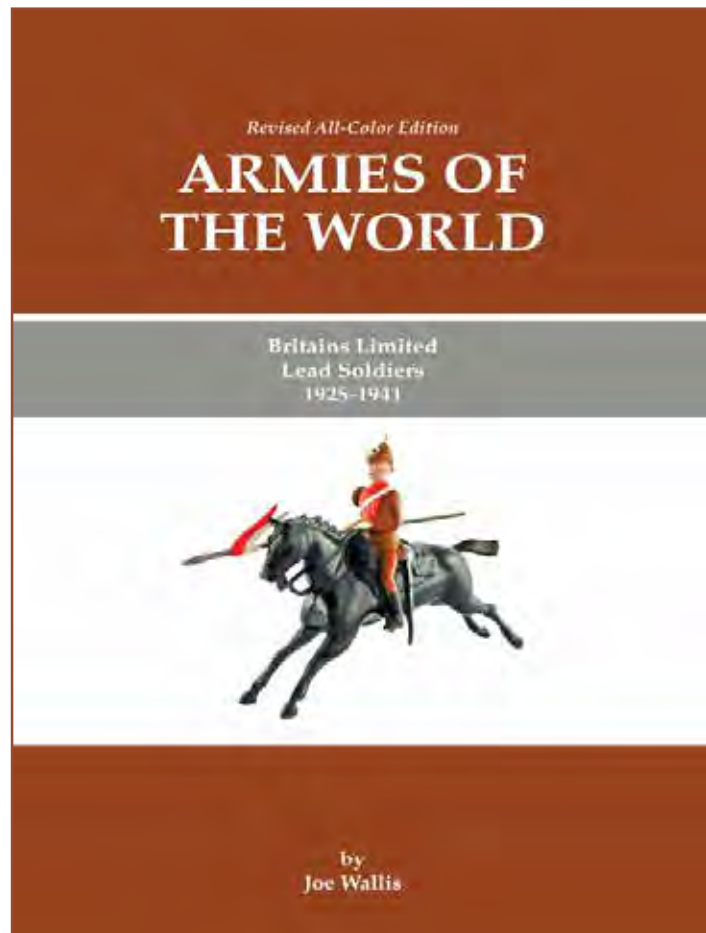
**Acknowledgements:** The author  
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Soldier Auctions for their generous  
sharing of photographs of original  
Willetts figures which have greatly  
enhanced this article.

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- 1 Contains 852 outstanding color close-up photographs instead of the 500 black-and-white photographs of the earlier edition;
- 2 Has been expanded from 420 pages to 780 (it now includes the contents of all of the noncatalogued sets from the Factory Records and reflects my research since 1993);
- 3 Is hard cover instead of paperback.



For delivery of an autographed copy, fill out the information below and send a check or money order payable to Joe Wallis (\$89 U.S., \$130 Canada; and \$150 overseas). These amounts include postage. No credit or debit cards. You can pay with PayPal to joewallis@comcast.net (but add \$5 for PayPal fees).

I also published the acclaimed *Regiments of All Nations*, which examines Britains Ltd. production between 1946 and 1966, and *Soldiers of Greater Britain, Britains Limited 1893-1924*. All my books employ the same easy-to-use format. My website is leadsoldierbooks.com. I list my books on Amazon.com (search on Joe Wallis and the titles of my books), but Amazon orders involve added postage cost and sales tax. Forward payment in U.S. dollars using checks drawn on a U.S. bank branch or a postal money order to: Joe Wallis, P.O. Box 3407, Arlington, Virginia 22203-3407.

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# BOOK REVIEW

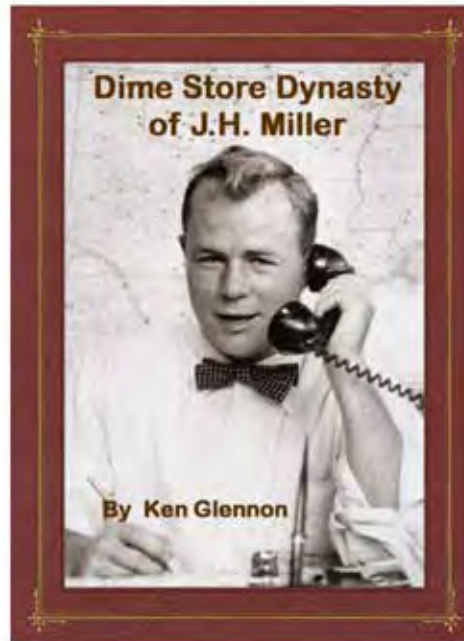
## Dime Store Dynasty of J. H. Miller

By Ken Glennon

Reviewed by Stan Alekna

I was very pleased to receive an early copy of Ken Glennon's recent book chronicling the life, family, businesses, successes and failures of a truly entrepreneurial American, John Hardin Miller, or J.H. Miller, as he is more commonly known in American Dime Store lore, and it is my privilege to provide a review on this exceptional book.

I have known the author personally for over twenty years and regard Ken as a friend and fellow Dime Store collector and hobbyist. He visited our home many years ago to see my Dimestore collection which at the time numbered over 2,000 Barclays, Manolis, Grey Irons, and other American makers, including a complete set of J.H. Miller soldiers, as well as a great many Miller novelty, Easter, Christmas, Halloween and Happy Farm items. Ken said that he was in the process of writing a book about Miller and he was very intrigued by my Miller novelty figures, many of which were new to him at the time. When I decided to sell my collection several years ago, Ken bought my non-military Miller items and photos of many of them are included in the book. I had figured that Ken's book would be similar in format to the many collector books authored by Richard O'Brien or Don Pielin's *The American Dimestore Soldier Book*, but would be focused solely on Miller's figures. Over the years, I met Ken at various toy soldier shows and we also communicated via email. I would always ask about his progress on the book and Ken always said, "it is coming along nicely." After several years had passed, I felt that Ken was either a slow writer or that he was not devoting much time to the task. After all, it only took Tolstoy six years to write the 1,225-page *War and Peace*!



Well, I could not have been more off base. What I did not know was that Ken was writing another book at the same time. Ken's 374-page book on J.H. Miller is a phenomenal, chronological compilation of facts, photos, interviews, letters and anecdotes about Mr. Miller and his life, and his amazing accomplishments. There are literally thousands of lines of quotes in the book which resulted from the countless numbers of interviews and meetings Ken had with Miller's family members, business associates, employees, and colleagues.



While there have been some excellent in-depth books written about William Britain's and other foreign toy soldier makers, there has never been a book of such depth written about an American toy soldier manufacturer as the *Dime Store Dynasty of J.H. Miller*.

In order to ensure that he really identified with the challenges and travails that Miller faced while perfecting the many processes he employed over the years, Ken Glennon spent many hours, weeks and months making latex molds, mixing the plaster-of-Paris, molding, extracting, and painting plaster figures. Ken **walked-the-walk** like no other author of Dimestore literature, including myself, has done, to the best of my knowledge.

Ken eventually made and sold a limited number of Commemorative sets of the twenty Miller soldiers, and I was privileged to acquire the first one of these sets which are very rare and a "crown jewel" in any American Dimestore collection.

# BOOK REVIEW *(Continued)*

John Miller's brilliant analysis of the American Dimestore marketplace catapulted him into an incredibly early success starting in 1939 with plaster nativity scene figures. You will have to read the book to learn of Miller's ingenious strategy and why his figures were in tremendous demand by every major chain of dime stores in the U.S. and abroad, for decades.

Ken artfully takes you through Miller's beginnings of casting plaster nativity figures in the basement of his Evanston, Illinois home in 1939, to where his production of Christmas, Easter, Halloween figures, masks, China-like figures, China vases and other dime store items had risen to one million items per month by 1947.

Production of the twenty poses of the 4.5- inch soldiers, fourteen of which had separate weapons or flags, began in 1950 with over seven million being sold to dime store companies by 1959.

Ken provides some new insights into Miller's soldiers such as an analysis of which figures were sculptured to represent various movie stars of the era. Changes in casting, painting and distribution over the years are also documented. Miller first became acquainted with plastic when he contracted with Peoria Plastic to make the weapons for his soldiers.

Miller saw that plastic was going to be the material of the future so in 1960, he changed production of his nativity figures to his own waxy plastic formula and the machines to blow mold the figurines in. He started with nativity figurines and when he introduced his Prehistoric Age Dinosaurs at the Chicago Field Museum in December of 1956, the factory had to gear up to 24/7



ML 4 General



ML 5 Officer w/Binoculars



ML 6 Soldier W/Sentry Dog



7 SOLDIER WITH FLAME THROWER & FLAME

ML 7



8 Soldier w/Walkie-Talkie



9 Soldier Prone w/ Bazooka



ML 10



ML 11



# BOOK REVIEW *(Continued)*



ML 12



ML 13



ML 14



ML 15

production to keep up. His dinosaurs were the very first, beating out MARX entering the market.

Once again, Miller demonstrated his marketing genius. Around this time, Mutual of Omaha was sponsoring the hugely popular Wild Kingdom TV show which prompted Miller to introduce his Wild Africa series of fifteen jungle animals and people which was also an instant success. Last but not least in the Miller Plastic genre was the Earth Invader series a.k.a. Miller Aliens, most famous of which is the Purple People Eater. Prices are at a premium with the Neptune figurine currently fetching \$1,800.00 in VG condition.

But dime store items were only the beginning of John Miller's business genius, tenacity, and perseverance. The J.H. Miller Manufacturing Company went bankrupt in the late 1950's, but Ken walks you through the phenomenal inventions, patents, and companies

that became Miller's subsequent legacy. Prominent among them is Mold-A-Rama which he and partner Millard Helms invented. To this day the Mold-A-Rama<sup>1</sup> machines are vending souvenirs across America's museums and zoos.

His other creations spanned from the first device to recycle aluminum cans; An innovative farm disking apparatus; The first Indy 500 inspired *Scattrack* racing facility, to the first quick-build bicycle velodrome. John Miller was a tireless, creative, entrepreneurial genius.

It took Ken 20 years to write his book because the J.H. Miller story goes far beyond toy soldiers and it simply required a lot of time, effort and persistence to document this unbelievable life story.

A current, value/price guide of all Miller figures is provided at the back of the book, using the O'Brien format to rate figures as **G**, **VG**, and **M**. The

book is 10" X 7", soft cover and the text and photos are on non-glossy paper.

The book is exclusively marketed on eBay at <https://www.ebay.com/itm/184861212240> or you can just enter, JH Miller Book, in the eBay search bar to find the book. It is currently priced at \$28.95 plus \$4.95 Shipping.

This is surely a must have book for those American Dimestore collectors who include Miller's in their "army" or for those who might want to consider collecting the larger genre of interesting Miller artifacts. Just Google Miller Soldiers or Miller nativity scene on your computer and you will be on your way to an exciting collecting adventure.

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<sup>1</sup> Mold-A-Rama is now a registered trademark of Mold-A-Rama Incorporated

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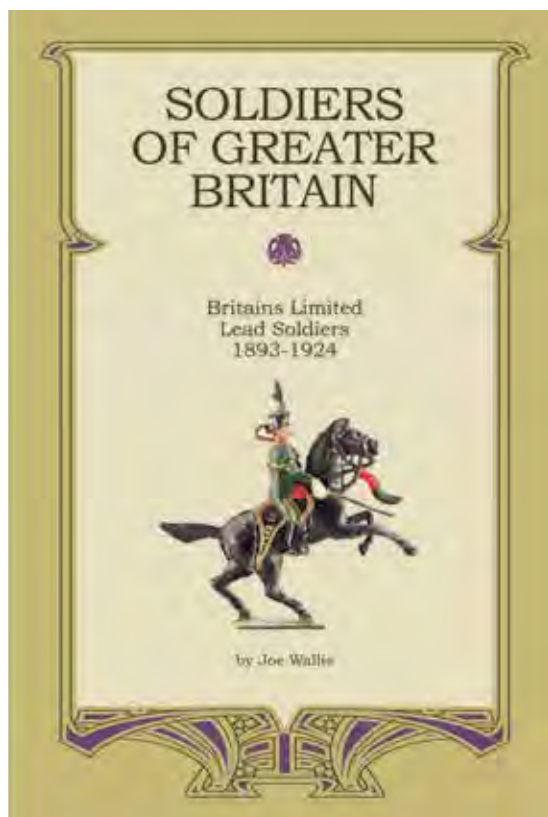


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## SOLDIERS OF GREATER BRITAIN - JOE WALLIS



*Soldiers of Greater Britain* by Joe Wallis deals with the years between 1893 and 1924 when the distinctive style and quality that made Britains toy soldiers the most popular in the world was developed. This well researched 453-page book answers questions about "ancient" Britains figures, mechanical toys, the accuracy of their models, the sources of their designs, the smaller scale B Series, the Paris Office, and Whisstock's wonderful box labels. See [www.leadsoldierbooks.com](http://www.leadsoldierbooks.com).

- Features 782 close-up color photographs placed throughout the text by the corresponding set descriptions;
- Provides color schemes, changes in sets, cross references to other sets with the same figures, and the years during which each item appeared prior to 1925; and
- Includes a Company History, a chapter of Identification Hints, a Glossary, Appendices listing sets made after 1924, and a Topic Index/Finding Aid.

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# BOOK REVIEW

## EUROFIGURINES

Reviewed by Russ Bednarek

*Eurofigurines* magazine debuted in January, 2005. Produced through the efforts of French collectors Philippe Albaret and Jean-Marc de Vion, *Eurofigurines* has established itself as the most informative publication for collectors of European made toy soldiers. *Eurofigurines* does not focus on a particular type or manufacturer as several other magazines, thus resulting in a most diverse and interesting study that also includes US manufacturers.

A typical issue of *Eurofigurines* comprises 30 plus pages. The French text magazine is printed using high quality heavy gloss 8"x12" paper. The advantage of using the gloss paper is that it allows the high quality photographs to really show off the detail of the figures. *Eurofigurines* is very picture friendly, as the majority of articles are dominated by the excellent photographs. It is not uncommon to have 12 photographs to appear on a single page. Military and civilian figures made of all types of materials have appeared in the magazine. Also examined are figures "publicitaires". These figures known to us as "premiums", were mostly plastic or paper and were free items that could be obtained by purchasing a particular product, usually coffee or chocolate. Well known manufacturers as well as the obscure makers have graced the pages of *Eurofigurines* making each issue a valuable resource. One of my favorite columns of *Eurofigurines* is where subscribers submit pictures of figures that they wish to have identified and then the corresponding column where subscribers have identified figures from previous issues. Needless to say, many fascinating and truly unique pieces have been discovered.

Accompanying each issue is a two page, double sided "Supplement" printed on regular paper that is not bound to the magazine. The



"Supplement" is used to advertise new books, magazines and upcoming shows. But most importantly, it allows any subscriber to advertise items he has for sale/looking to purchase. Contact information is included for each subscriber posting their ad. In each issue a form is enclosed to be completed to place an ad in the next issue should the subscriber wish to

do so. In addition to the "Supplement" in some issues an index of articles sorted by manufacturer is also included.

*Eurofigurines* is published four times a year. The French text should not discourage new subscribers as the number of photographs that appear make each issue a valuable resource for identification. The price for a one year subscription for US readers is 45 Euros. Considering the cost of postage now, a *Eurofigurines* subscription is a bargain. New subscribers are encouraged to use Paypal as the method of payment. *Eurofigurines* sponsored show the "Grande Bourse Internationale" is scheduled to be held October 17, 2021 in Nanterre France. Those planning to attend should use the email below to insure that the show will proceed as scheduled. I highly recommend a subscription as I'm sure you will enjoy each issue as much as I do.

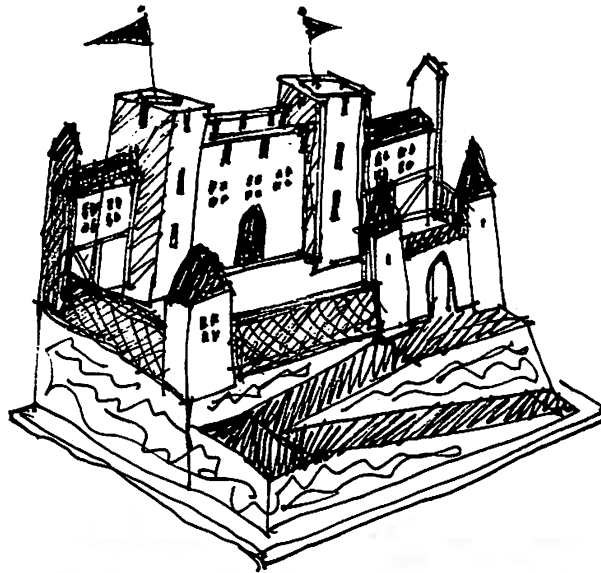
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# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

*By Francesco Marchiandi*

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## Introduction

Some 200 years ago, on May 5th, 1821, at 5:49 pm, His Imperial and Royal Majesty Napoleon I, By the Grace of God and the Constitutions of the Republic Emperor of the French, King of Italy, Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, Mediator of the Swiss Confederation, slipped this mortal coil. He was also known as "*Le Grand'homme*", "*Le Tondou*", "*Le Petit Caporal*" (adored by the French people but above all by his soldiers - les grognards - who had lovingly baptized him with such unofficial titles on many different occasions). He died still young for the times (just 51 years). He passed away, almost in solitude, on a remote island in the southern Atlantic where he had been exiled by the "Perfidious Albion". The latter expression seems to go back to a sermon by the French theologian Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, or to the Marquis Agostino di Ximenes, a Frenchman of Spanish origin. He was the author, of a verse (at the end of the eighteenth century), which said "we attack the perfidious Albion in her waters".

Napoleon chose to surrender to the English who, among all his enemies, he considered likely to treat him more "tenderly" than the others, perhaps imagining an exile in England. England was also the only country with an established "democratic" tradition, and with a Parliament. Compare this with the autocratic Prussians, Austrians and Russians who hated the idea of democracy, and were unlikely to treat him chivalrously. The Emperor had surrendered himself to the English, sure of being in the hands of an enemy, yes, but respected and treated honourably.

Obviously, for England and much of the rest of Europe, Napoleon was instead mocked, with many other nicknames such as "Boney", or "the black man", or even "the Ogre". Even for many French and other ruling houses he was simply "the parvenu" or the usurper; he was not forgiven for being the product of a regicidal revolution, bloody and dangerously propagating new and free ideas. His many qualities only increased the fear of being swallowed up by those ideas, subversive of the established order and concern that the political equilibrium of the old monarchies would be upset forever.

This, but also much more of course, is what happened at that time, and which today arouses still endless controversy and annoying reinterpretations of what happened; in my opinion the most stupid thing is to pretend to want to look at and understand History with today's eyes.

However, from our point of view as collectors and enthusiasts, we cannot ignore that Napoleon and his "*Épopée*" provided, perhaps more than any other, inspiration for toy soldier makers. Despite the misery and violence of the almost continuous wars he waged, the magnificent, elegant uniforms, with glowing and wonderful

colour, have provided an opportunity for manufacturers to churn out series after series of toy soldiers. These have enabled both young boys and much older collectors to make their dreams of his most glorious feats come to life, recreating the glorious deeds of the Grande Armée in miniature. Many of us started collecting toy soldiers thanks to Napoleon and his exploits! This article, for now at least, will briefly recall some of these manufacturers, focusing upon the French and drawing primarily upon figures from my own collection.

This remembrance of Napoleon is based therefore on a just small part of the vast production of famous and ancient *maisons/ateliers* such as CBG Mignot and Lucotte, but also with the contribution of some characters by Vertunni and Ballada, The Bicentennial is celebrated with a selection of images of those wonderful figurines, in small photographic chapters. Details are given in the captions to the images, given in ***bold italic font***.

## Napoleon on Campaign

The French army was divided into many parts, (according to the different theatres of war) after the revolution. Various reorganizations were initiated by Napoleon from 1801. It was unified in 1804 and took the name of *Grande Armée* with the Emperor as the Commander in Chief. By virtue of necessity, it can be divided into Army Corps (autonomous on the battlefield as they are equipped with all the arms required to operate independently). Command of the Army Corps was entrusted to the Marshals of the Empire, who moved in synchrony, according to the directives given by Napoleon. This fearsome instrument of warfare became as efficient, flexible, impetuous, and aggressive as the revolutionary armies. In attack, the now famous "French fury" (a definition given by the Italian allies at the battle of Forno on 6th July, 1495) was still alive.

The armies allied to France (the Confederation of the Rhine, but also those who fought with Napoleon in Russia) were almost always subjected to French commanders, and the subordinates and troops were able to "learn" the typical conduct of war and French methodologies.

The enemy armies (Prussian, Austrian, Russian, etc.), were beaten several times, but learned the lessons from the numerous defeats, so that in the end they adopted the French military psychology and methodology of the time, gaining great experience and profiting from it.

The French forces almost always had an impressive mobility for the time, so much so that Napoleon was said to win wars just by the rapidity of the movement of his troops. There were Divisions that travelled as much as 60 kilometres in a single day. One of Napoleon's historical phrases to the Military Intendancy (responsible for supply

# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021) (Continued)

of equipment) was: "... there are never enough shoes for the Army ...".

The following images provide just a few examples of how these campaigns have been reflected in the form of toy soldiers.



*Magnificent and exquisite creation of CBG in a diorama box for which the company was famous. This set shows Napoleon, protected by the Chasseurs of the Guard, along with other officers, flanking his troops as they set out for battle. All the figures are 54mm solids. All the riders' horses have a green base, while the infantry, both of the Line and the Grenadiers of the Guard, already have beige bases although the right leg is forward. Note the finesse and accuracy of the painting. It was probably made around 1900.*



*Napoleon, standing between Generals and the Aides de Camp, has just got out of the field fiacre, and is carefully observing the unfolding of the battle. The evening stretches the shadows, and the battle is about to end. His calm shows that the day has paid off! All the figures are Lucotte 54mm solids. The refinement of the painting leads us to think that this realization dates to around 1910.*



*Infantry of the Revolution in the first Italian Campaign under the command of General Bonaparte. On the left is the flag of one of the Demi-Brigades created at the time. The flag bearer is a Vertunni creation dating from 1930-1940 (although this particular Demi-Brigade is the 84th never fought in Italy!). All the other figures are CBG dating from 1895-1900, with striped trousers, almost sans-culottes.*



*Such men from the old regiments, (Line regiments and Chasseurs à Pied), but with many more new volunteers, formed the Armée d'Italie. They were often barefoot and lacking equipment. But, harangued by Bonaparte (who promised to take them: "... to the richest plains and cities in Europe ..."), they followed him loyally and he was able to apply his strategy. CBG figurines from 1895-1900.*



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

*(Continued)*



*This image represents a scene during the first Italian campaign (1796-1797), the capture of a bridge defended by the Austrians. The Austrian is alone in a last stand, the cannon is now lost, and his companions have fled or fallen. All the pieces are rare figures by Lucotte, both in terms of their attitudes/positions (loading the musket, inserting the bayonet, firing) and in the uniforms (from the years of the Revolution-Convention). Figures are all, 54mm, ronde-bosse, dating from round 1910.*



*Detail from the previous image*



*Artillery was the weapon, which Napoleon knew how to use like no other before. In his early career he was a cannonier. The Siege of Toulon in 1793 was the first occasion when Napoleon directed the positioning of two gun batteries with great success. It was he who in later battles concentrated the guns in what was called the Great Battery, containing a hundred artillery pieces and more. This was a deadly union of firepower! Here we see a 1910 Lucotte artillery train. The servants are mixed, Lucotte c. 1910 (very rare) and CBG figures from the 1950s.*



*In the smoke of battle!  
Detail from the  
previous image.*



*Artillery Train and Foot Artillery, both of the Guard, Grande Armée; Lucotte and CBG figures, as mentioned above.*



*Napoleon and his aides de camp control the firing of the gun battery. All figures by Lucotte, c. 1910. The house is CBG's famous tin mansion, c. 1910-20.*



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

*(Continued)*



Among all the cavalry corps we have chosen to show here not a regiment but a squadron: Les Mamelouks. They were the most exotic troops, attached to the Regiment Chasseurs à Cheval de la Garde. In fact, over time, French troops were added to the original contingent of the Mamalucchi who had followed Bonaparte from Egypt. They retained the original uniforms. Lucotte, productions, c. 1910-30.

## Napoleon and his General Staff

There is not enough space to make a complete list of all the valiant Marshals and Generals of the Empire who served Napoleon. Starting from the revolutionary era, many figures with considerable military skills, as well as courage and personal initiative, emerged. All contributed to Napoleon's many victories and glory. Many emerged from voluntary conscription and confirmed Napoleon's affirmation that "... every French soldier carries in his backpack the baton of a marshal of France ...".

The concept of operation of the Grande Armée was always directed in a univocal way by Napoleon himself. However, he always allowed a certain autonomy to his subordinates. This allowed the Emperor and others Corps to support each other or to meet at just the right moment for the battle.

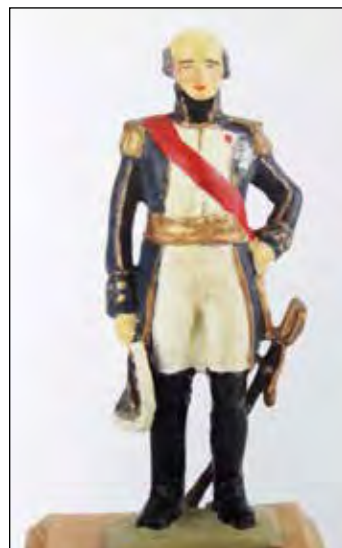
Of course, there were cases in which things did not always go as planned. The unexpected, the lack of experience of new recruits and the low quality of some troops, the scarcity of resources, but also errors of judgement, as often happens in life, led to ever more serious disasters.



Napoleon and his Staff ... "captured in a collector's window, with the box of dreams behind him". Here you can recognize some glories of the great epic, but both Lucotte and other brands have created so many characters that they put any author in difficulty: a book would not be enough! This group includes Lucotte figures, 54mm, solid (ronde-bosse), productions, from 1905 to 1920.



Napoleon and his General Staff; CBG figures from various eras, all mixed up.



Louis-Nicolas Davout, the Iron Marshal. Very strict with everyone but especially with himself. Among the first to be appointed a Marshal (1804), from 1798, he was among the most trusted and skilled of Napoleon's generals. He was never beaten, for example consider his role at the battle of Auerstadt! This is a Vertunni figure, probably subject to modifications by the previous owner/collector Col. Gautho-Lapeyre in 1960-70.



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021) (Continued)



Two of the greatest cavalry commanders of all time. On the left, Prince Joachim Murat, able to drag, with the iron discipline of French cavalry, to Eylau, a charge that passed from side to side, like a blade, through the Russian lines and then returned to their starting point. On the right, with his well-known but eccentric clothing and the famous pipe with which he led the charges, is Antoine Charles Louis, Count of Lasalle. Of ancient but modest nobility, he was the Commander of the famous "Infernal Brigade" (5th and 7th Hussars). He died in Wagram, shot in the forehead; he was 33 years old, slightly surpassing his saying that a good hussar shouldn't be aged over 30! Both the figures are by Vertunni, early production.



Mounted on horseback is Joachim Napoleon, Murat King of Naples, a rank to which Napoleon elevated him for his undoubted military merits and for having married Carolina Bonaparte, the Emperor's younger sister. Next to him on foot is a Guide of the Guard or a Hussar (it is not clear) of the Neapolitan army. The figure of Murat is a product of Lucotte, c. 1940, while the figure on foot is a Vertunni, c. 1950,.



Marshal Grouchy was the last to be raised to this rank (in the campaign of 1815 or "the Hundred Days") 1815). After many campaigns, and injuries received in action, on this last occasion he was unfortunately not up to the task assigned to him. His failure to arrive on the Waterloo field allowed the Prussians to attack Napoleon on the right flank and from behind. It was not a question of treason. Contravention of Napoleon's orders, always regarded as mandatory, frightened him. Moreover, he was not a quick commander in his choices. Slowness in war is nearly always a grave fault: the roar of the guns from Waterloo did not convince him to act differently from the orders he had previously received. There is therefore perhaps an element of guilt and responsibility for the defeat. The figure here is from the great series of Vertunni, 54mm, ronde-bosse, one of his earliest creations, c. 1930-40.



Colonel François Antoine Kirman or Kirmann, commander of the Squadron de Mamelouks from September 1808. The squadron was an integral part of the Regiment de Chasseurs à Cheval de la Vieille Guard. Another splendid figure by Vertunni, 1930-40 period.

## Tête de Colonne (Head of column) - *Sapeurs et Clique des Grenadiers à pied de la Garde Impériale*

Each Colonel wanted his regiment, when marching in a parade or simply passing through villages and towns, but also in battle, to have an elegant and martial impact on enemies, colleagues and civilians alike, with their flags blowing in the wind.

On such occasions the marching regiment was always preceded by the so-called Tête de Colonne, part of which comprised the impressive Sapeurs (sappers or pioneers) and the regimental band (La Clique). The latter always sported bright and colourful uniforms. It was not possible and convenient to exempt from this fashion the Imperial Guard. Could the Grenadiers on foot of the Old Guard lack this elegance? The Colonel was therefore willing, paying from his pocket, to keep up appearances!

# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

*(Continued)*



We have explained in the main text the importance given to the "Head of Column". Here we see that of the Regiment de Grenadiers de la Vieille Garde with the initial group of Sapeurs and drummer and a mounted Major alongside, followed by the Regimental Music with the Drum Major Jean Nicolas Sénot at the head (and next to the Chapeau Chinoise). Lucotte figures, 54mm, 1905-20 period.

Close up of the pioneers - Here Lucotte shows us the grandeur of the Sapeurs, the minutiae of the design, painting and the additional work to produce these fine figures (the tablier-apron- made of lead is soldered onto the figure after casting; the typical long beards, the tricolour cockade, buttons on leggings, etc.). These models demonstrate perfectly the detail and the accuracy of the painting by Lucotte which so delights collectors. Production from c. 1905-20.



Another close-up of the musicians of the Grenadiers of the Garde.



Another Tête de Colonne of the Imperial Guard led by the Sappers and the Music of the Grenadiers of the Guard, followed by a company of the 3eme Regiment des Grenadiers Hollandais de la Garde. Everyone also marches to the roll of the drums of different battalions lined up on the right side of the column. Napoleon himself and his brother Louis Bonaparte in the uniform of the King of Holland observe the parade. All the figures are CBG from various eras: Sappers from 1960 (note the ranks badges on the sleeve of the first sapper), Music of the 1ere Regiment de Grenadier of 1930. The first three lines of the Dutch Grenadiers are from c. 1905 (identified by the small heads), while the others are from 1910. The side drums (also CBG) are figures from c. 1900. Only the figures on horseback are Lucotte, dating from c. 1910-20.



Close-up of the musicians of the Grenadiers of the Guard from the previous photos.



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

*(Continued)*



*Close up of the previous: 3eme Regiment de Grenadiers Hollandais*



*Close up of the previous image showing Napoleon and Louis Bonaparte in the background.*



*Another close up shot showing four drummers from different regiments.*



*Timbalier de Gendarmes d'élite - this is another example of the richness of the musicians' uniform. This is a figure by the artist Ballada, 54mm solid made in 1950-60.*



*Another timpani player from Ballada, c. 1940-50. It is difficult to determine the precise regiment as the variations of the uniforms of the musicians over time are endless.*



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

## (Continued)

### Napoleon pays homage to his "Grognards"

It is well known how much Napoleon was keen, while respecting their roles, to have and maintain a family relationship, almost paternal, with his soldiers or "Grognards". They were never spared praise and acknowledgments. These were expressed in various ways: medals, Legion d'Honneur, pensions and cash prizes, special reward weapons (swords, pistols, carbines), etc.



*Marin de la Garde, figure of the artist Ballada 54mm ronde-bosse made in 1950-60, showing a typical Napoleonic uniform.*

Respect, however, was everything and, as mentioned at the beginning, the soldiers repaid him abundantly in blood, courage, hard work and ... loving nicknames, despite the many grumbles!

In an exchange of words, a grenadier told him that he was "bigger" than him; the Emperor kindly corrected him, telling him: "you are not 'bigger' than me, you are taller".



*We like Napoleon so much that in this suggestion of donating prizes and awards to the troops we have placed two of them in the scene! Seriously, the "two Emperors" converse amiably with the veterans, and one of them is accompanied by the Empress. On the left we see the 3eme Regiment de Grenadiers Hollandais de la Garde, while in the centre and on the right we see Grenadiers of the Old and Young Guard, standing. All these are CBG figures from the years between 1905 and 1920. They are accompanied by soldiers, officers and politicians from Vertunni. It's a real party, an Imperial party!*



*How many times has Napoleon had such close relations with his "grognards"? Many times, for sure. Here we are at peace, but even on the battlefield it was common place to see the Emperor wandering*



*A Company of Marin de la Garde passes through a street in Paris, to go to the changing of the Guard at who knows which Palace, under the watchful eye of a gendarme on horseback.*

*All Lucotte figures, c. 1910-30*

### Napoleon and the Empress

In the following scenes we remember both the women that Napoleon married (but represented here with only one CBG figurine). In the photos there are no differences between the two. The figure is always the same. It seems certain CBG used the same figure, perhaps with slightly different painting, for both ladies, unlike Vertunni and other makers. Therefore, the captions refer generically to the Empress and nothing more, when using figures by CBG.

Napoleon by all accounts loved Josephine madly. He met her at the beginning of her tremendous rise to fame, but unfortunately, she died of pneumonia in the same year, on May 29, 1814, four days after catching a cold during



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

## (Continued)

a walk with Tsar Alexander in the gardens of Malmaison. He was also very fond of Marie Louise, who gave him the son he so desired to establish his dynasty. The son, alas, had an unhappy and unfortunate fate: Napoleon Francesco Giuseppe Carlo Bonaparte, or Napoleon II, lovingly nicknamed L'Aiglon (the King of Rome and then, when in Austrian "hands", Franz, Duke of Reichstadt), was born in Paris, March 20th, 1811 but died in Vienna, July 22nd, 1832, aged just 21 years.



*Joséphine Tascher de la Pagerie, widow Beauharnais, and General Bonaparte, at the beginning of their idyll. He has just been appointed as Commander in Chief of the Armée d'Italie. He was by all accounts very much in love, and would have suffered from being apart from Joséphine, but this did not prevent him from fighting at his best. Austrians and Sardo-Piedmontese would soon get to know him all too well as did the rest of the world. Both figures are Vertunni, 54mm, ronde-bosse, early production c.1930-35.*



*In the special setting of the Château de Fontainebleau, with the Grenadiers de la Garde behind them as guards, the Imperial couple cannot imagine that a few years later, the first act of abdication will take place in the same scene. The horseshoe-shaped stairs of the castle will be the stage for the famous Farewells between Napoleon and his beloved Grenadiers: "Les Adieux". With tears in their eyes these rugged, haughty and rough men, accustomed to the harshness of war, greeted their Idol (see below for an image of that scene). Figures by CBG, 54mm, ronde-bosse, c 1930-35.*



*The Empress smiles, hand in hand with Napoleon, from a balcony that could be in the Palais de Tuileries. They offer themselves to the people, perhaps after a victorious campaign or maybe while celebrating the birth of the Imperial heir. CBG, 54mm, ronde-bosse, c 1930-35.*

*Napoleon Francesco Giuseppe Carlo Bonaparte (born in Paris, March 20th, 1811 – died in Vienna, July 22nd, 1832), otherwise known as Napoleon II, and lovingly nicknamed L'Aiglon. Here Vertunni represents him as a young man, close to death from consumption, in the uniform of an Austrian Prince.*





# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

(Continued)



Here we see L'Aiglon, as his great father would have liked to see him, surrounded by the brave French Officers and Marshals, honoured to his rank, heir to the throne and former King of Rome. All figures are Vertunni, old versions.

## December 1840 - The Return of the Emperor - The funeral in Paris at "Les Invalides"

Napoleon's earthly journey, now transformed into a legend, ended with an ignominious and almost inhuman exile, but his mortal remains were welcomed back into France, with all due honours in 1840.



The arrival of Napoleon's remains at Courbevoie; painting by Henri-Félix-Emmanuel Philippoteaux.

On November 30th, 1840, the *Belle-Poule* arrived in France, the coffin was then transferred twice on steamboats to reach Paris.

On 15th December an immense crowd attended the military procession that reached *Les Invalides*, descending from the *Champs Élysées*, where it was welcomed by King Louis-Philippe.



Napoleon's funeral procession, descending from the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, emerges from under the Arc de Triomphe, planned by Napoleon himself after the battle of Austerlitz, but which he never saw completed. The history of the Arc de Triomphe is very troubled, but what he did not succeed in life, he achieved after his death: the last earthly glorification in his homeland.



This fantastic and unique as well as accurate diorama was made in 1944 with 54mm ronde-bosse figurines by the artist Alexandre Ballada, with the help of Fernand Durand-Grimaldi and Maître Eugène Lelièvre. It can be seen at the Musée de la Figurine Historique de Compiègne.



# THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON - A CELEBRATION IN TOY SOLDIERS MARKING THE BICENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (1821-2021)

(Continued)



Georges Fouillé, 90mm Napoleon, dressed in green Chasseurs tunic. Circa 1965. Fouillé's models are splendid, of delicate and exquisite workmanship, but I find them almost aseptic, I prefer those from Berdou (unfortunately I don't have any examples in my personal collection!).



For the record we recognise that in recent times CBG has reproduced old diorama boxes but also some new dioramas inspired by situations or anniversaries such as the Return of the Ashes. This also included a limited edition of the funeral cortege. These are very well finished and very interesting and impressive. However, in my opinion they often lose the charm of the ancient models and the natural spontaneity and immediacy these had when they were new. Nevertheless, they are beautifully done. This one shows "Les Adieux" (1814– Napoleon's first abdication).



**OLD TOY SOLDIER**



**AUCTIONS USA**

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**Rodden Large Scale Tournament Knight \$900**





Heyde British Light Dragoons 1815 \$2500



Les Miniatures "Maharaja of Baroda"  
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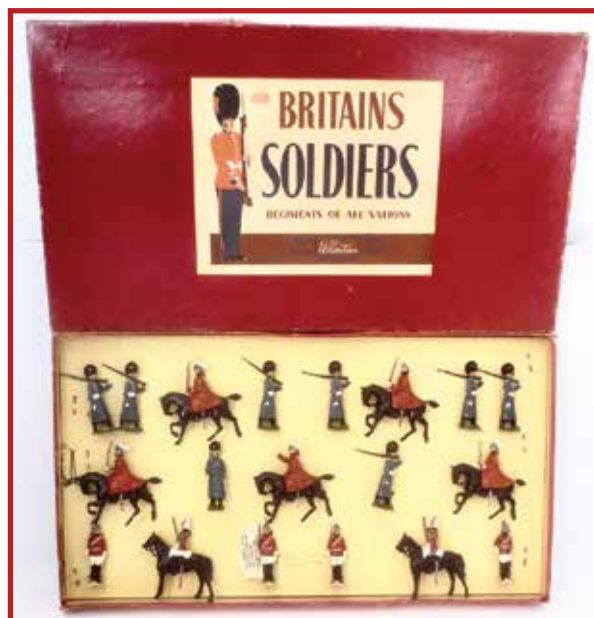
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Large Slush Cast Lead "Ships of War" Collection \$600



RARE Britains #2049 British Army Display Set \$2000





## ELASTOLIN DIORAMAS 1913-1960

This book is already the 2nd photo guide on Hauser/Elastolin show-room dioramas. Represented are many of never before published original photographs of dioramas built for Hauser/Elastolin in the period between 1913 and 1960. The documentation's themes are ranging from military scenes and political events via zoological highlights and Wild West topics to certain examples of the early post-war period. The editors were able to share their treasure of high quality old original black-and-white photographs with the readers community on quite a high-quality standard and added also some more recent photographic documentations. 112 pages, hardcover, 21 x 30 cm. Price 39.00 Euro plus postage: within Germany 3.00 Euro; 5.00 Euro within the EU; Non-EU and World the real shipping costs.

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## ELASTOLIN

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## ELASTOLIN DIORAMAS 1960-1983

The most beautiful original dioramas of the famous German toy figure company Hauser. This book on Elastolin will delight both modellers and diorama builders. Due to the great collection of impressive photographs any knowledge of German language is not required. The book is nothing less than a pictorial tour de force of dioramas. All shown dioramas are products of the artist Josef Tonn. Their themes and topics range from the times of Romans, Vikings, Normans, Huns, medieval knights and the Wild West to the battlefields of soldiers from the 18th and 19th century. Castles, farm and zoo scenarios are shown as well as Safari settings. 'Elastolin Schaustücke' has 144 pages, mostly in full colour (some double paged photos!). Size 23 x 30 cm. Price 39.00 Euro. Shipping: EU 5.00 Euro. Non-EU and World the real costs.

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# THE CHICAGO TOY SOLDIER SHOW TURNS 40

*By Jan and Roger Garfield*

## Toy Soldier Collecting in the 1970s

To explain the origin of one of the world's oldest and largest toy soldier shows we have to go back to the collecting world of the 1970s.

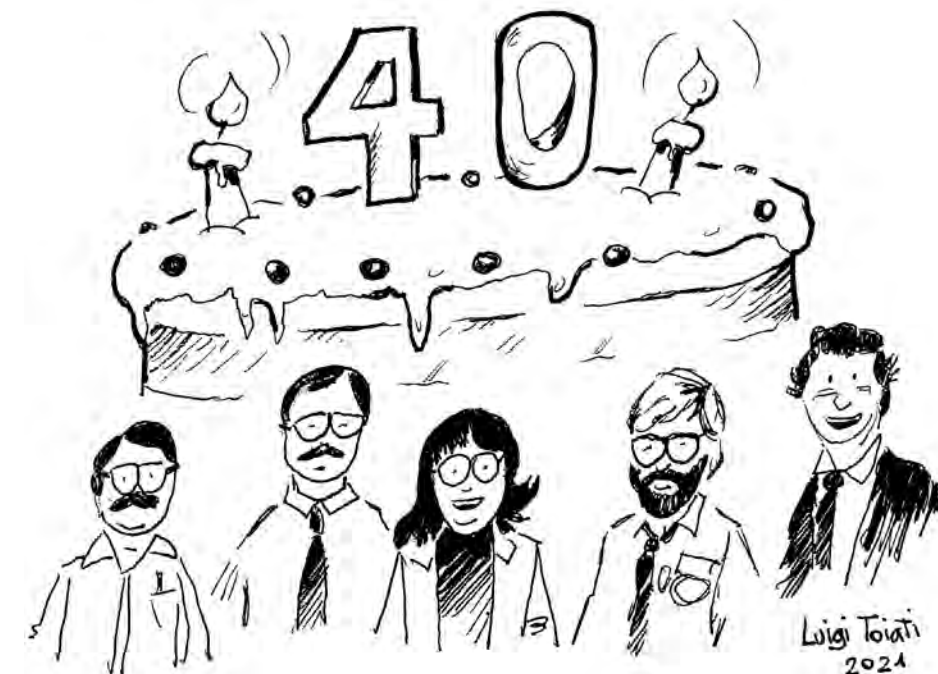
In 1966, lead soldiers stopped being sold as toys in the US. By the early 1970s, that realization began to sink in with many collectors. This was true even though plastic toy soldiers had been gaining in popularity since the 1950s.

The scale and scope of metal toy soldier production never recovered after the second World War. Experienced toy soldier collectors had been seeking those sets that were being deleted from catalogs.

In the early 1970s, there were very few books about toy soldiers and certainly no magazines dedicated to the toy soldier hobby. Toy soldier history and knowledge was often locked in the memories of a few collectors. A few hobby societies had publications, but often the "toy" aspect of soldiers was not the main focus.

In the days before the internet, it was much harder to find and to share information.

When toy soldier collectors wanted to add to their armies, they quite often traded, bought, or sold among themselves. When a collector ventured outside this circle, the search was difficult. A few pioneering dealers



began to put out regular sales lists, but they were few and the competition for coveted items was fierce. You could also venture into antique stores or antique fairs where you had to dig quite deep to find a few rewards. Most antique dealers did not put a high premium on our little lead friends.

By the early 1970s, there was a renewed interest in collectibles in general, and specialized hobby shows became more common. Even so, the poor toy soldier collector still had to seek his quarry at train shows, doll shows, and antique toy shows.

Also remember that at this time toy soldiers and model soldiers had just begun to diverge. Many modelers used toy soldiers as the basis for

their creations. Model soldier kits had become available, but it still took a talented artist to create a detailed, realistic, model soldier. Fifty years ago, the average collector did not have access to the beautiful commercially produced models that one finds today.

When model toy soldier collectors had gatherings to display their artistry and compete for prizes, the toy soldiers were often considered poor relatives and sometimes regarded as raw material for conversion to model figures.

## Old Toy Soldier Newsletter

There were old toy soldiers and there were old toy soldier collectors, but our toys always seemed to be secondary or adjunct to other collector interests. Such was the setting when five friends, Steve and Jo Ellen Sommers, Joe Wallis, Don Pielin, and Roger Garfield got together and formed a partnership.

In 1976, the partners (who were all toy figure collectors), recognized that there were enough toy soldier collectors and enough interest to warrant a specialized hobby publication. In that year, *Old Toy Soldier Newsletter* was created and the partnership was named OTSN.



Original OTSN Partners Joe Wallis, Steve and JoEllen Sommers, Roger Garfield, and Don Pielin, 1983

# THE CHICAGO TOY SOLDIER SHOW TURNS 40 (Continued)



Flyer From Premier Show in 1981

OTSN was truly a newsletter then. The copy was hand typed, printed in black and white, then collated and hand stapled by the five partners sitting at a dining room table. It was truly an amateur enterprise; the friends had a lot of fun creating something original and novel.

The partners were surprised by the welcome and instant success of the newsletter among toy soldier collectors. In fact, they were surprised by the number of toy soldier collectors. The *Old Toy Soldier Newsletter* continued to grow, flourish, and become more professional in appearance and production.

In 2002, *Old Toy Soldier Journal* was sold to Ray Haradin in whose capable hands it remains today.

## The Chicago Toy Soldier Show

OTSN took heed in 1981 of toy soldier collectors that expressed an interest in having a collector show dedicated solely to toy soldiers. As Steve has said, "like our OTSN magazine, we invented our path."

The partners knew that if they wanted people from beyond Chicagoland to attend the show, it would have to be near Chicago's O'Hare Airport. For the first 2 years, the show was at a

small hotel just down the road from the airport. In retrospect, the hotel had seen better days, but it was what OTSN could afford.

Don recalled in a 2019 interview with *Old Toy Soldier* magazine that the first show was planned for 70 tables and 55 were sold. He reminisced: "That was the only year that the show did not sell out." It has been fully booked ever since.

A favorite story that the partners enjoy telling is about a wedding that had been booked at that first hotel the night before the show. The hotel was not planning to take down the dance floor in the show venue until the next morning, after the vendor arrival time! The wee hours of that Sunday morning found the partners on their hands and knees disassembling the dance floor that lay on top of the carpeting.

Once again, the five friends were amazed at the success of their effort. Toy soldier collectors were travelling from all over the United States and from overseas to attend the show. Collectors were so eager to find other collectors and to find such a concentration of the toys they collected!

In 1983, the show moved to the then brand-new Hyatt Regency in Schaumburg. The show has remained there for 38 years. Don and the partners

forged a working relationship that has lasted through many changes of ownership, many re-decorations, and changes in staff. The show has been at the Hyatt Regency so long that many of the vendors and attendees have become friends with the Hyatt staff.

Don recalled in his 2019 interview that he and brother Dick made annual trips out East to go to model soldier shows to look for old toy soldiers in the flea market sections. He used those shows as an inspiration for the OTSN event. Because of first-hand experience, it naturally fell to him to become the partner to manage the show. He did so for 35 years. The other four OTSN partners concentrated on producing the *Old Toy Soldier Newsletter* (later to become the *Old Toy Soldier Journal*). However, as the annual show approached each September, it was all hands-on-deck because Don needed them to pitch in.

Early in the 2000s, the present authors retired to Virginia and Roger left the partnership, though always staying in touch with friends and former partners. We never missed the annual OTSN Show. In 2015, during a holiday catch-up phone call, Steve mentioned that the OTSN partners were getting ready to retire from managing the show and were looking for a buyer. Steve recalls Roger saying: "How about me and Jan?"



Jan and Roger Garfield, Show Owners



# THE CHICAGO TOY SOLDIER SHOW TURNS 40 *(Continued)*



**Many Loyal CTSS Vendors have attended all 40 Shows**

The negotiations were made and the transition between long-time friends and colleagues was seamless. Because OTSN Inc. was to continue, we chose the new corporate name, Chicago Toy Soldier Show (or CTSS), Inc. So, the Show continues to flourish to today and still remains, “in the family”. Roger likes to joke: “Not a lot of people can say that they have been partners in the same toy soldier show twice!”

## **Hobby Trends**

As the commercial production of metal toy soldiers began to draw to a close in the mid-1960s, a new form of toy soldier began to appear. These new metal soldiers were created in the manner of the earlier toys and were meant to complement them. Although these new soldiers were designed and painted to look like the toys no longer being produced, they were aimed at a nostalgia audience of adult collectors, not children.

These new metal nostalgia models covered the “British style” of 54mm figures as well as the larger scale dimestore types. Nostalgia metal soldiers were mainly designed/created by toy soldier collectors. The poses and subject matter often complimented or fitted in with the older toys but did not always replicate them.

Some of these nostalgia toy soldier manufacturers continued to evolve into production of the beautiful metal model soldiers available to collectors today. These exquisitely detailed and realistic models neither try to imitate the toy soldier look nor are they meant to be played with. These model soldiers are intended to be admired on a shelf, often in equally detailed dioramas or groupings.

The metal model trend in toy soldier collecting reflects a generational change. The adult age group with discretionary funds to buy collectable soldiers has no allegiance to the toys of earlier generations. Their toy boxes likely contained action figures or computer games. There is no nostalgic connection.

What makes this new generation of metal models different from earlier generations is that these soldiers are purchased complete, ready for display, and painted to a high standard. Collectors do not need to be artists or to purchase them from artists to own these realistic masterpieces.

## **Plastics and Playset Collecting**

At the same time, plastic toy soldier collectors generated some unique trends. The popularity of plastic toy soldiers and playsets began to

wane in the late 1960s, in large part due to the controversy around the war in Vietnam. Plastics soldiers and playsets were losing popularity to action figures, which were often based on superheroes and other fantasy subjects.

Pong, by Atari, the first commercially successful electronic game, was introduced in 1973. Virtual play has probably been the greatest innovation in toys in decades. Electronic games are the childhood memories of many of today’s adults. Virtual play still constitutes a major part in the play of today’s children.

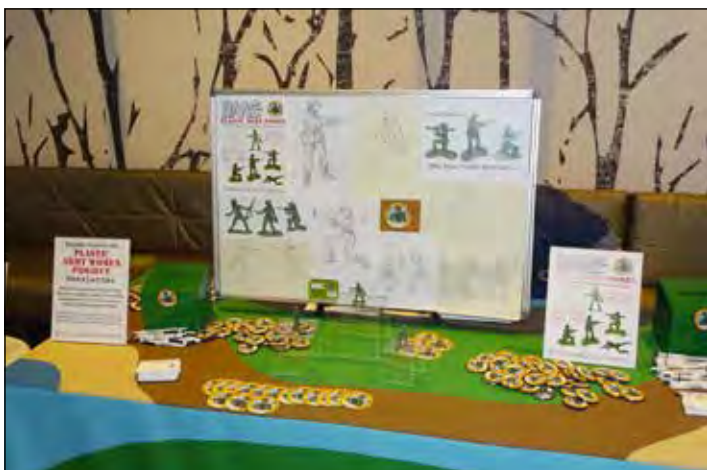
In the 1970s, collectors of plastic soldiers and playsets found themselves in a situation similar to the situation of metal soldier collectors only a decade before. It was inevitable that the creative minds in the plastics realm would start to think about recreating the soldiers and playsets that they loved.

These early efforts aimed to recreate the playset experience that the original 1950s and 1960s toys introduced. The new playsets successfully emulated the look, feel, and composition of earlier playsets. Other plastic soldier manufacturers followed in the footsteps of their metal soldier collector counterparts. They produced and marketed plastic figures that that would fit in and augment vintage plastic soldiers. More recently, similar in trend, plastic soldier designers have shed any allegiance to the nostalgia of mid-century toys and have ventured into subjects and styles and manufacture techniques that are wildly creative.

Another trend that is specific to plastic toy soldier collecting is the finding and use of the original toy manufacture molds. Collectors of metal soldiers must look at this trend with great envy. Perhaps metal soldier molds were too often lost or melted down for scrap.

Enthusiastic toy soldier entrepreneurs have tracked down many of the molds used by producers of the plastic soldiers of the 1950s and 1960s.

# THE CHICAGO TOY SOLDIER SHOW TURNS 40 (Continued)



CTSS Showcases New Products - BMC Plastic Army Women



Toy Soldier Repair Demonstration by Benjamin Zerbib (Paris)

These toy soldier producers have addressed the even more difficult challenge of finding companies that will cast from the molds.

The result of this plastics trend is that collectors can have multiple issues of their original favorite toy soldiers. Many collectors, as kids, felt constricted by the limited quantity or apportion of troops in their playsets. Today's toy soldier enthusiast can create a one-for-one numerical representation of any battle, if they are so inclined (and their budgets allow).

Many collectors use 1970 as a benchmark in toy soldier collecting. For collectors of metal toy soldiers, it represents the cessation of metal soldiers sold as children's toys and the beginning of new metal soldiers produced in the manner of the old toys. Pre-1970 generally came to mean vintage/collectible, and

sometimes antique toys that had been commercially produced.

For many plastic toy soldier collectors, 1970 benchmarks the sale of the Louis Marx company, the largest producer of plastic soldier playsets in the world. Though successive owners of the Marx brand continued to produce Marx playsets, innovation in the commercial field had come to an end.

There existed, particularly in Europe and the UK, a transitional trend. Many of the traditional producers of metal soldiers experimented with plastic lines well before the end of metal production in the mid-1960s. Some of the earliest efforts by these firms included converting metal molds to produce plastic figures using the new material.

Since 1970, many of these second-generation plastic and metal toy soldiers have, in turn, become

collectible. As companies cease and existing companies drop items from their catalogs, collectors have sought them out and a new collectibles market has come about.

## The Future of Toy Soldier Collecting

There is no crystal ball to gaze into, and the COVID pandemic has taught us about unpredictability. However, we can venture a few predictions based on trends we have seen over the past 40 years.

There are many collectors operating online using eBay and online auctions. For many collectors, these virtual venues have taken the place of toy fairs and antiquing in vast antique malls. The proliferation of auction companies regularly offering large numbers of figures for sale suggests that there are many buyers as well as sellers of toy soldiers! In the 70s



CTSS Room Trading and Display



CTSS Show Merchandise



# THE CHICAGO TOY SOLDIER SHOW TURNS 40 (Continued)



Sunday Show Crowd Waiting In Line



Diorama Display



CTSS is an international Show



One of three CTSS Sunday Ballroom Venues

and 80s there were just a handful of regular auctions held by the major auction houses; now, we have lots of specialized toy and toy figure sales.

The era of large crowds jostling shoulder to shoulder at toy soldier shows is gone. Collectors have a better chance of acquiring rare items because competition has decreased. As a result, sophisticated collections are coming to market and many are priced competitively. It is also true that there is still furious competition for rare items; many sets are fetching record high prices.

For collectors that are active in the hobby, one can find things that rarely came up for sale and they are coming up at prices that make them accessible.

To borrow from our comic book collector friends, if the 1970s through 2000s were the golden age of toy soldier collecting, we may be experiencing a silver age.

For some years there has been a shift from traditional forms of collecting to an expansion in areas such as eBay and online auctions. This would argue against the observation that younger generations appear to be less invested in vintage objects, perhaps as a result of the concept of a disposable culture.

Many of the collectors that have left the hobby are those that had a nostalgic connection to toy soldiers as their playthings. From where are new toy soldier collectors entering the hobby?

Undoubtedly, an interest and love of history has always motivated toy soldier collectors, but where and how newer collectors are being exposed to history differs. A popular movie, television series, or electronic game can spur interest in history; for example, an increase in WW2 toy soldiers can be traced to the series *Band of Brothers* or the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. Versions of the electronic game, *Call to Duty* brought many young players to an interest in WW2 history.

The interest in electronic gaming has to some extent back-filled a new interest in board gaming and war gaming with soldiers and vehicles. Some of this new generation of historic gamers are finding their way to toy soldiers.



# THE CHICAGO TOY SOLDIER SHOW TURNS 40 (Continued)



In 2020, CTSS holds interactive virtual Show



Marc Gaynes and Will Beierwaltes  
2020 Virtual Seminar



Demonstration using Toy Soldiers for Gaming

The virtual world has influenced toy soldier collecting in other ways. Buying toy soldiers from online auction platforms has replaced in-person shopping for many collectors. The COVID-19 pandemic also created a surge in online toy soldier purchases as other venues temporarily closed. Many retailers have shifted their marketing strategies as a result.

Rather than regarding the virtual world as detracting from in-person events such as shows and fairs, older collectors should learn to embrace the 21st century perspective on collecting. There has been a huge increase in interest in virtual and interactive forms of toy soldier shows and toy soldier marketing. We see virtual participation in the hobby not as a threat but as a means to broaden access to the hobby.

We are only a snapshot in time as our hobby evolves, but it seems certain that the little soldiers that we love to collect will remain around for many years to come.

## The Show Today

When the five friends started the *Old Toy Soldier Newsletter* and subsequently the OTSN Show, we were all collectors of vintage/collectible soldiers, which is evident from the name chosen for the newsletter. The Show is special because collectors from every segment of the hobby have joined in and made the event their own.

Of the 55 tables at the first Show in 1981, only one was dedicated to plastics and playsets. This was at a time when the plastic toy soldier collecting was starting to grow, just as metal toy soldiers 10 years previously. Today a large portion of the Show is dedicated to plastics collecting.

Visitors to the Chicago Toy Soldier Show today will find vintage, collectible, and antique toy soldiers and related items, created from the 1800s to the present. These vintage toys can be found in lead, plastic, composition, and some other surprising materials.

Collectors can also find newly manufactured toy soldiers made in the manner of the old toy soldiers and designed to complement and to fit in with their older cousins. Many of the foremost makers of today's model

soldiers are also present at the Show to premier their remarkable wares.

The Chicago Toy Soldier Show festivities start on Wednesday before the actual Sunday Show. Vendors begin to arrive at the venue hotel from all over the United States and the world. Many open their hotel rooms for display, trading, and sales as well as to visit with fellow collectors.

CTSS has added seminars and workshops to Show activities. Participants can now stretch their event up to 4 days if they wish.

That is why CTSS has added the tagline: . . .**all things toy soldier!**

(For more details about the 2021 Chicago Toy Soldier Show, see the advertisement in this issue. Please, come join us!)



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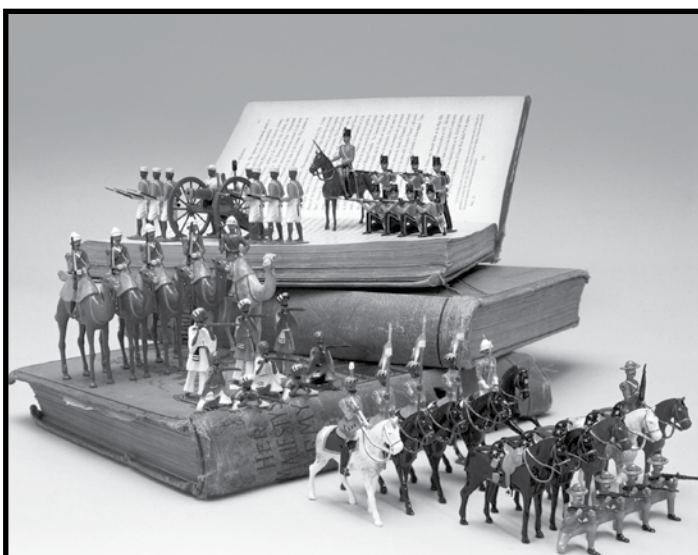
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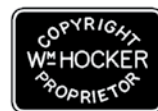
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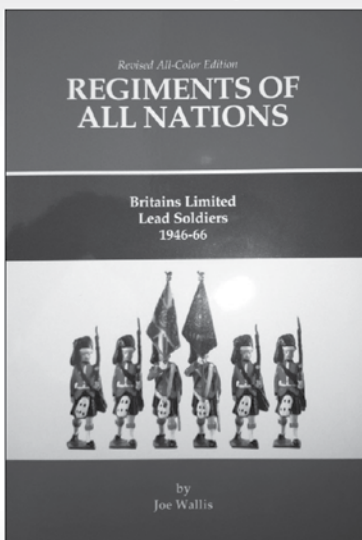
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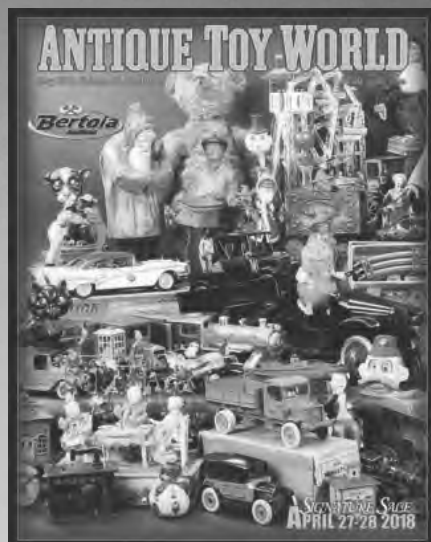
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## September 26th, 2021 - Sunday 10 am - 3:30 pm.

40th Annual Chicago Toy Soldier Show.  
Hyatt Regency in Schaumburg, Illinois.  
Roger Garfield: Phone 847-567-5355  
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