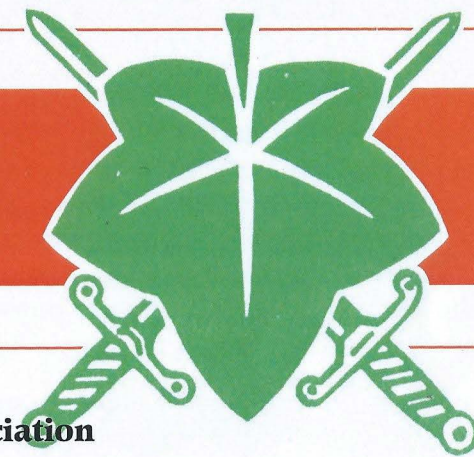


THE FORMATION SIGN

JOURNAL OF THE MILITARY HERALDRY SOCIETY



'A Badge Collector's Dream'

An album – or three - of cloth badges produced by the Calico Printers Association



Shortly after the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow* ended on Sunday 17th March **Mike Jackson** posted a note on the British Badge Forum asking if anyone had seen the two albums of formation signs featured on that evening's show. Six further posts on the Forum that night were followed by many more in the next few days, all enthusing about the range of badges featured and pondering their fate.

Mark Smith, the *Roadshow's* militaria specialist had interviewed a lady who had brought along two albums of badges which turned out to have come from the Calico Printers Association, sole suppliers of printed badges to Britain's armed forces during and after the Second World War. Describing the books as having 'just about every badge ever issued...Absolutely incredible...a badge collector's dream', Mark valued them at £10,000.

Helena, the owner – who had turned up at the show on a sudden whim - subsequently appeared on the Badge Forum to say that the two albums – the larger having seven double-sided and six single-sided pages, the smaller with 26 double-sided - contained around 450 badges plus a dozen arm bands. Having said on the programme they were connected to her Uncle Fred, she later thought they may have been acquired by her father who in the

late 1970s/1980s had spent time at textile makers Tootal Ltd, the Association having merged in 1968 with the English Sewing Cotton Company to form English Calico Ltd which ten years later became Tootal. Helena's comment in her post that she "liked the idea of somehow making images of the badges available" prompted The Editor to see what he could do. Having contacted Helena the Editor and Membership Secretary **Jon and Lyn Mills** arranged a visit to photograph the albums – their task greatly assisted by a lighting rig borrowed from their granddaughter **Jessica Reeve** - and spent an enjoyable day with Helena and family. The resulting pictures appear in the following pages.

Whilst preparing for this visit another post appeared on the Badge Forum from **Mark Hayward** who revealed that he had a similar collection of Calico badges in two albums and generously offered to share them with the Society. The resulting photographs, kindly taken by Mark appear later. As if that were not riches enough French collector **Herve Halfen**, who had revealed on the Badge Forum in November 2018 that he had just bought a folder full of printed badges produced by the Association, also agreed to share them with the Society. This Special Edition of *The Formation Sign* is therefore a compendium of three superb collections of cloth badges reflecting something of the wartime and post-war products of The Calico Printers Association. Although the collections are dealt with separately the armbands from all three collections are dealt with together. As space does not permit a detailed description of every badge details of well-known formation signs - Divisions, Commands and Districts - found in Colonel Cole's books, Major Waring's Identification or The Editor's *Badges on Battle Dress* are not provided. Less common items - regimental flashes, the badges of the Cornwall Home Guard and other Home Front organisations - are briefly explained and a section is devoted to rarities and mysteries, several of the latter unexplained some eighty years after they were produced.

On behalf of the Society The Editor would like to say thank you to Helena, Mark and Herve for their generosity in sharing these unique documents.