

Major M.F.M. Meiklejohn, V.C.



Victoria Cross

Major Matthew Fontaine Maury Meiklejohn was born on Nov. 27, 1870, the son of a professor and educated at Edinburgh. He was named after Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873), an American Naval officer and hydrographer.



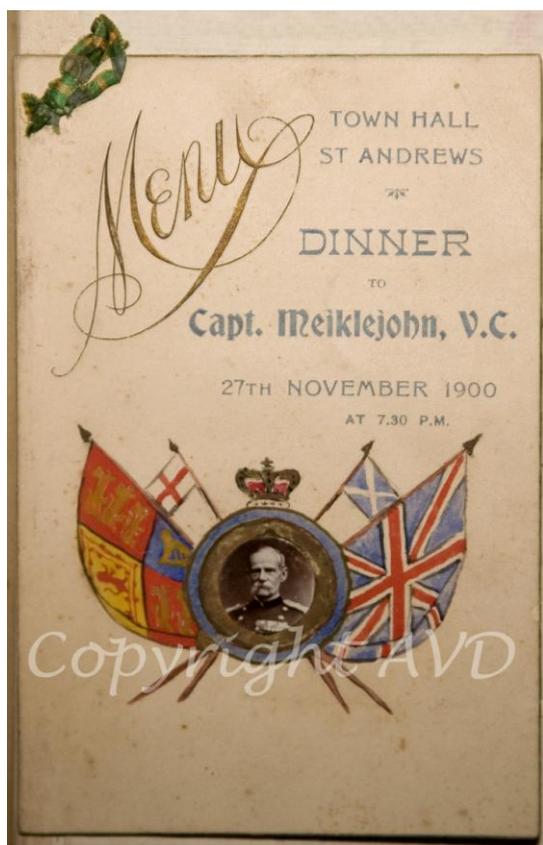
Maj. M.F.M. Meiklejohn



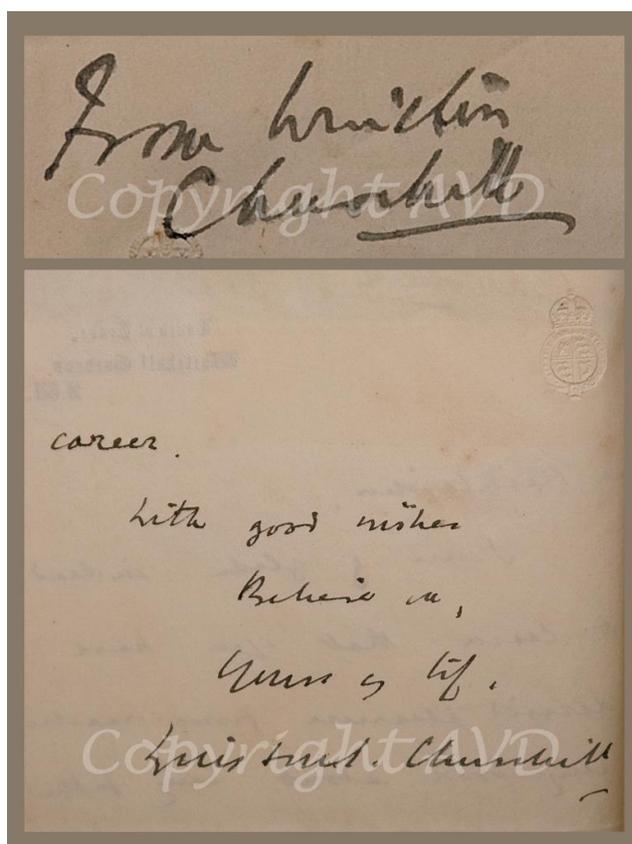
Unused half of ticket when he left Ladysmith

He married in 1904 Vera Josephine, daughter of the late Lieut-Col. Marshall. To them were born a son and two daughters. The Major was attached to the General Staff Army Headquarters and had seen considerable active service. He joined the Gordon Highlanders in 1891 and was promoted to Captaincy in 1899. The gallant officer served with the Chitral Relief Force 1895, and also the Tirah Expedition 1897, being slightly wounded in the latter. On outbreak of the war in South Africa the Gordons were shipped to Natal. General French attacked the Boers at Elandslaagte at dawn on the 21st October, and surprised the Boers under Gen. Kock. Colonel Ian Hamilton then brought up reinforcements by train, the Manchesters, Devons and Gordon Highlanders supported by the Imperial Light Horse. Five companies of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders under Col. Dick-Cunyngham, V.C. were among the reinforcements.

After the main Boer position had been captured, some men of the Gordon Highlanders, when about to assault a kopje in advance, were exposed to a heavy cross-fire, and having lost their leaders, commenced to waver. Seeing this, Capt. Meiklejohn rushed to the front and called on the Gordons to follow him. By his conspicuous bravery and fearless example, he rallied the men and led them against the enemy's position, where he fell, desperately wounded in four places. For this gallantry he was rewarded with the Victoria Cross. His wounds were as follows:-three bullet wounds upper right arm, smashing bones, little finger right hand shot off, bullet wound left thigh, this no great matter; a snick on neck; his sword and scabbard was smashed with bullets, two bullets through his helmet. He was taken to Ladysmith where his right arm was later amputated, almost at the shoulder. After recovering from his wounds, he left for Southampton on the steamer Montrose, where he arrived in October, 1900. He was decorated by Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in December, 1900. He wore an armless sleeve, folded across the breast upon which her Majesty, with words of gracious sympathy, pinned the covered decoration.



*Dinner invitation in honour of Meiklejohn
after he received his V.C.*



*Letter from Winston Churchill, congratulation Meiklejohn on
his V.C.*

In 1901, he was Garrison Adjutant at St. Helena. He then served on the General Staff at Army Headquarters where he received his majority, then became an officer-instructor at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. Even with only one arm, he remained a very keen golfer. On June 28th, 1913, Meiklejohn met with a serious accident at Hyde Park.

While riding to the parade ground, where Brigadier-General D. Henderson was to inspect the University of London Officers Training Corps, his horse took fright at the band and bolted. Major Meiklejohn, who had only one arm, was unable to control the horse, which dashed away towards the Row. In order to avoid some children and their nursemaid he selflessly steered his horse into the steel railings. The animal leapt the railings and came down with a tremendous crash, throwing its rider heavily to the ground.



Cigarette Cards in honour of Meiklejohn

New No. 944. (Old No. 133.) METROPOLITAN POLICE. 20000-5-20000-10-10. M.P.

Sender's No. _____ Division. R. M. Station. _____
28 day of 6 1913

From Hyde Park TELEGRAM. To Richmond

Forwarded at _____ Received at (a) _____

Please inform Mrs. Meiklejohn
 Hartland House Kings Rd Richmond
 that her husband Major Meiklejohn has
 met with an accident in Hyde Park.
 He is now in Middlesex Hospital under
 the care of Dr. Johnson. Will she please
 attend. Reply.

Receiver's No. _____ (b) W. Meap. R.S.

(a) When the message is in reply to another, the word "Reply" is to be added in front of received at.
 (b) Signature of Sender or Receiver.

Telegram to inform Mrs. Meiklejohn of his death, after the accident in Hyde Park

Major Meiklejohn was picked up unconscious, and taken to the infirmary at the Knightsbridge Barracks, where he was found to be suffering from severe concussion and injury to one of his legs. The horse's neck was broken. Subsequently, Major Meiklejohn was conveyed in an unconscious condition to the Middlesex Hospital, where an operation was performed. He died of his injuries at 4.50am on July, 4th, aged 42 years and was buried in Brookwood Cemetery. The King and Queen were represented at his funeral.

References:

1. Photo of Victoria Cross (Courtesy of dust cover – Martin-Leake, Double VC – Ann Clayton)
2. Private Collection: Dr. Arnold van Dyk - Scrapbook of Maj. Meiklejohn