

A peep into the Victorian Image Collection

Part 2 – Soldiers

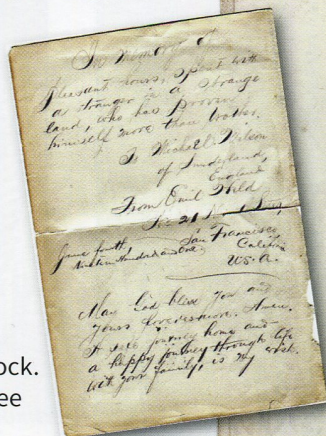
By Ron Cosens

The collection consists of over 100,000 Victorian cartes de visite and cabinet cards.

The carte de visite (cdv) became popular in many countries from 1860 onwards and was joined by the cabinet card (cab) from 1866. By 1905 both formats started to be replaced by portraits on postcard (pc) stock. Last time we looked at Victorian dogs, this time let's see some Victorian soldiers.

But firstly, here is a pair of unusual items; a photo of a soldier (with dog!) dated 1901 but with a letter attached. The letter reads:

'In memory of pleasant hours spent with a stranger in a strange land, who has proven himself more than [a] brother. To Michael Wilson of Sunderland, England from Emil Held, No. 21 Ninth Street, San Francisco, California, U.S.A. June fourth, Nineteen Hundred and One. May God bless you and yours forevermore, Amen. A safe journey home and a happy journey through life with your family, is my wish.'



Emil Held with his dog (cab 1901 San Francisco USA)

The British army had about 215,000 soldiers in 1860 compared to a UK population of 28 million people, and about 275,000 soldiers by 1901 compared to a population of 38 million: This accounts for the low number of military photographs from that era in most family albums.

Many soldiers were posted abroad and albums contained pictures of those who served in the UK as well as those that served in overseas territories; British military action occurred in India, Africa, Malaysia, China, and even Australia, New Zealand and Canada during Victoria's long reign.

Studio portraits reflect various aspects of army life such as uniforms, equipment, comradeship, pride, bravado (?) and of course family ties; both parting portraits and welcome home photos as well.

I am amazed at the range of clothing that soldiers had to wear. All regiments had dress wear and combat wear but early in the period red was a common tunic colour for war time and hats were often tall, cumbersome and impracticable.

Although khaki was introduced in India in the 1840s by soaking white uniforms in mud, coffee or curry powder, we all remember the scarlet tunics at O'Rourke's Drift in 1879 and it was not until the Second Boer War (1899-1902) that khaki become the norm.

Gallery

N.B.: all photographs have been dated from studio details, not from knowledge of military uniforms



Elaborate painted background (cdv 1863 East Dereham)



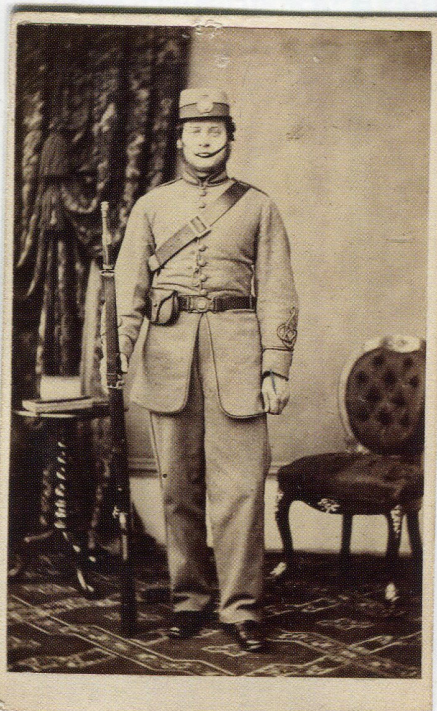
Hand coloured photo of James McBeade (cdv c1871 Barnard Castle)



Infantry squad (cab c1900 Cleckheaton)



William B Arneil 14th Perthshire
Volunteers in outdoor studio (cdv 1861)



Soldier of Guildhall Company
98 Cheapside London (cdv 1865)



Major Barry Domvile R A
(cdv c1868 London)



Staff Sergeant with loving family (cab c1877 Chatham)



Smart uniform (cab c1895 Birmingham)

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A peep into the Victorian Image Collection (continued)



Scottish soldier (cdv c1875 York)



Soldier with rifle
(cdv c1878 Manchester)



Soldier in outdoor studio
(cdv c1889 Meerut India)



Soldier with bicycle (cab 1907 York)



Soldier with dog (cab 1900s Mandalay Burma)