

Typed transcripts of obituary notice in the Cheltenham Looker-on of 18 April 1843 of Summers Higgins, Inspector-General of Hospitals

Publication/Creation

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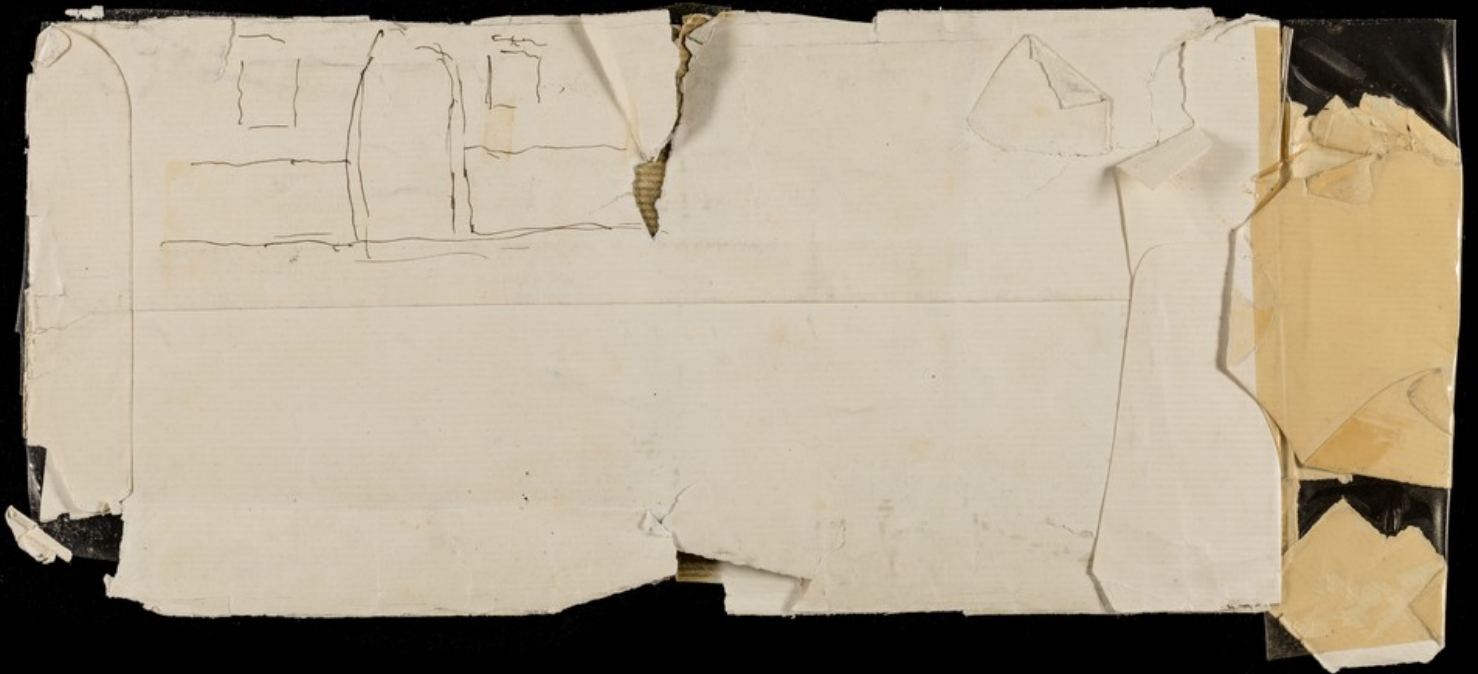
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I have sent a similar copy to Dr. Routh, Pres. Med. Coll., 30/5/95 —

Documents referring to
Inspector General of Hospitals Summers Higgins, M.D.

and the Salavera Cup belonging to the Medical Staff Mef. at Netley

(Sent by Inspector General, J. S. Prendergast, M.D., a.m.s.,
to Surgeon General Sir G. Rose, May, 1895 —)



RMC 489

Copied from

"THE CHELTENHAM LOOKER-ON" of

April 18th 1843.

Died on the 5th inst., at his residence, No. 1 Berkeley Place, SUMMERS HIGGINS ESQ., M.D. Inspector-General of Hospitals, in the 66th year of his age.

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Death of SUMMERS HIGGINS ESQ., M.D. Inspector-General of Hospitals in the British Army.

It has seldom fallen to our lot to record in our Obituary the public services of any man connected with the Medical Department of the British Army, more interesting than those of the respected gentleman whose demise it becomes our painful duty to announce. - Mr Higgins began his public career about the year 1798, by being appointed Assistant Surgeon to the 22^d Dragoons, then quartered in Ireland, the County of his birth. - With them he served at Antrim, where the first Earl O'Neil fell a victim to the fury of a misguided populace. He accompanied his regiment to Egypt, where it fought under Sir Ralph Abercrombie and when it was reduced, was appointed Assistant Surgeon to the 59th regiment of Infantry. From thence he was promoted to be Surgeon to the Buffs, or 6th Dragoon Guards; and shortly after was raised to the rank of Staff Surgeon, in which capacity he served at the battle of Talavera: here the sick and wounded, both of the French and English Armies, when they retired from their respective positions, were committed to his charge, -and here we must pause in our narrative, to record a most valuable tribute to his memory - a touching and beautiful address, accompanied by a valuable Cup, that was presented to him by a body of the British Officers.

To SUMMERS HIGGINS, ESQ., Staff Surgeon,

To whose care the Hospitals of Talavera were entrusted, when the English were obliged, notwithstanding their VICTORY, to leave them exposed to a vanquished Enemy,

THIS CUP IS PRESENTED,

By the BRITISH OFFICERS, who, forming a part of that melancholy charge, were deeply impressed by the unshaken constancy with which he offered up his Liberty and Expectations at the shrine of Humanity and Public Duty.

They indulge a hope that this Cup may sweeten and perpetuate the charm of self-approbation, and ever be a memento of this truth, that altho' the Pride and Pomp of War may belong exclusively to the WARRIOR, yet in all MANKIND to follow the line of duty with undiviating rectitude, through difficulty and danger, is TRUE GLORY.

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NAMES OF THE OFFICERS.

WILLIAM GUARD, Lieut. Colonel 45th Regiment.	GEORGE COLMAN, Captain, 31st Regiment
T.W. GORDON, Lieut. Colonel 3rd Guards.	W.W. STEPHENS, Captain, 66th Regiment.
W.W. SHERIDAN, Lieut. Colonel Coldstream Gds.	THOMAS GEILS, Captain 3rd Guards.
S.T. POPHAM, Major, 24th Regiment.	CHARLES COLLIS, Captain, 24th Regiment.
THOMAS FOTHERINGHAM, Major 3rd Guards.	GEORGE BEAMISH, Lieut, 31st Regiment.
CHARLES BOOTHBY, Captain Royal Engineers	A. BEAMISH, Lieut. 31st Regiment
J. TAYLOR, Captain, Royal Artillery.	H. TENCH, Lieut. 61st Regiment.
C.T. BRICE, Captain, 3rd Dra- goon Guards,	C.C. STANHOPE, Lieut. 29th Regiment.
T.P. HOWARD, Captain, 23rd Light Dragoons	A. GAMBLE, Lieut. 31st Regiment.
F.M. MILLMAN, Captain, Coldstream Gds.	WILLIAM SCOTT, Ensign, 3rd Guards.
C.M. CHRISTIE, Captain, Coldstream Gds.	W.C. TOWERS, Ensign, 3rd Guards.
T. HUNTER BLAIR, Captain, 91st Regiment.	

Dr Higgins is addressed as Staff Surgeon, being the rank he then held in the Army.

In resuming our narrative after this, we feel that a catalogue of services however distinguished and honourable, becomes cold when contrasted with those honest and eloquent expressions of the heart from men who knew him best. But it was not from the Officers of his own army alone, that Mr Higgins won golden opinions. When Marshal Mortier, the Duke of Treviso, entered Talavera, he was so pleased with the care that was taken of, and the humanity that was shewn to the French in the Hospitals, that he advanced to Mr Higgins, out of his private purse, by way of personal loan, a sum of money to be expended in procuring requisites for the sick. Even Napoleon presented him with a passport, that enabled him to go to Paris, and subsequently placed a cartel at his disposition, to enable him to return to England, at his convenience. From England he was sent back again to the Peninsula - served at the Siege of Badajos - was appointed Deputy Inspector; and after attending every action in the campaign, was put in charge of the Great Hospital at Antwerp, after the battle of Waterloo. But his professional labours were not allowed to terminate here - he was put in charge of the Hospital at Valenciennes during the existence of the Army of Occupation.

On his reaching England once more, the Medical Authorities, in compliment to his long, varied, useful and honourable labours, bestowed on him the appointment of Chief Medical Officer in the Island of Jamaica. But, alas! his health was gone - he had spent it in the service of his Country; - and, ultimately, he came to our town to spend the residue of his days; - and here he closed his honourable career on Wednesday last the 5th of this month, at his house Berkeley Place, in the 66th year of his age.

We have spoken of Dr Higgins only as a public man - of his well-known private worth, we need not speak. The events of his public life sufficiently describe it; but, we may add, that if anything can increase the sympathy with which our readers will peruse our story, it will be this, that he was the beloved brother of our popular and most respected townsman - Colonel Warner Westonia Higgins. -

As a sequel to the foregoing account, the interesting letter, copied from one of several, about the same date, in Chaltenham, is appended. - By the Will of the son the Talavera Cup and also Portrait of his father were bequeathed to the Officers of the Army Medical Staff, Netley, - where in a handsome Mess-Room, deposited by the Executor, they remain tokens of the most honourable sentiments on the part of giver and recipients.

It may be noted that the inscription of the wounded subscribers names is inside the cover of the Cup - the address or dedication on the outside.

IN MEMORIAM.

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To the Editor.

Sir,

In "The Times" of last month appeared the following announcement of the death of a gentleman long known by name and connections with our town, but of retired habits, and for many years resident elsewhere:-

"On 12th inst., in London, Lewis Higgins Esq., only son of the "late Sumners Higgins Esq., M.D., Inspector-General of Army Hospitals. "deeply regretted by his relatives and friends."

A few remarks may interest. He was of studious literary tastes; in medicine and law well read; his retentive memory remarkable, but he never followed any profession. His features aquiline, finely formed, and expression intellectual. Unfortunately his health had been indifferent for the greater part of his life, though he attained 72 years. His literary familiarity with medicine, probably without practise, was not to his personal benefit - and at law he was not successful. He was dissatisfied with its subtleties and results.

In 1887, his only sister, from whom he had never been separated, died. His grief at her loss was intense, and never fully rallied

from. His epitaph at Brompton Cemetery was more sincerely worded than such frequently are, and the beautiful and apposite lines quoted were specially selected by him:-

"Rest comes at length; though life be long and dreary
"The day must dawn, and darksome night be past;
"Faith's journey ends in welcome to the weary,
"And Heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last;
"Angels of Jesus, Angels of light
"Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night."

His remains were placed in the same vault made by order for that purpose in 1837 for his only sister. It is noteworthy that the family from which he came was eminently military. The father of Dr Sumners Higgins had been a subaltern in the army, and his five sons were all in it and served with distinction.

In St Peter's Eaton Square, is a mural tablet to Colonel Sir Samuel Gordon Higgins, K.C.H., Third Guards; in Trinity Church, Cheltenham; to Colonel Warner Westendra Higgins, K.H., late 21st Light Dragoons; in the Parish Church of Mount Mellick, Ireland; to Inspector-General Sumners Higgins, M.D. In Tunbridge Wells a Memorial to Major General Lewis Higgins, formerly Carabineers; and in Brompton Cemetery to General Gordon Higgins, Royal Artillery. Thus the five gallant brothers are recorded by one that, of few survivors, can recollect them personally and their honourable antique characteristics of modesty, manliness, and fearlessness.

I remain, Sir,

Obediently yours,

A CHELTONIAN.

July 6th 1891.

Copied from
"The Gloucestershire Echo."
July 1891.

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