

I. Collections Level Description

Department: Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast

Collection Type: Tibetan Collection

Reference: BELUR. COLLECTION

No. of items: 4

Notes

Date of research visit: 19th May 2014 Contact: Gavin Glass, Curator



Photographs of Captain J. C. Bowen-Colthurst (1880 - 1965)
1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles

Category

Diaries and newscuttings

Photographs

Religion and ritual

Loot

Description

INTRODUCTION: The Royal Ulster Rifles Museum was opened in 1962 and has one fairly small display hall primarily consisting of uniforms, badges, medals and regimental memorabilia. Only seven men from the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles were involved in the Younghusband Mission to Tibet (1903-04) as a machine gun detachment under the command of Lieutenant J. C. Bowen-Colthurst (later Captain). This group were attached to the 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers whilst in Tibet.

OBJECTS: There is one object [BELUR.AC.769] described as a 'priest's rosary' and was brought back from Tibet by Colour-Sergeant J. Lyle. By 'priests rosary' this refers to the Tibetan Buddhist monks or lamas, made from bone, this ornament that would have been worn as part of the regalia of Cham costume or by the statue of a wrathful deity.

PHOTOGRAPHS: There is one photograph album of 'views of Tibet' [BELUR.AC.957]. This is a large album which follows the chronology of the mission. Images are of landscapes; diplomatic events; other regiments; Tibetans; animals; significant places and buildings. It is not known who the photographs were taken by, but it was almost definitely

the official regimental album from the campaign. The captions are hand written and there are various numbering systems throughout the album. There is also a handwritten index accompanying the album.

ARCHIVAL MATERIAL: There are two scrapbooks [BELUR.AC.4505] relating to the campaign, which were compiled by Lt. J. C. Bowen-Colthurst and appear to be his personal items. These are comprised of press cuttings relating to the mission and Tibet more generally, with some annotations. There is also a further photo album of Tibet and India which belonged to Bowen-Colthurst, however the pages have become separated and it would require some time to reassemble in a coherent order. It contains photographs pasted onto card pages along with handwritten captions and notes. There is also a framed map of the route the mission took through Tibet from 'Tuna to Gyang-tse Jong', which is signed in pencil by J. C. Bowden-Colthurst in one corner.

As part of this project, the photograph albums and news cuttings albums have been digitized in order to facilitate further research. They can be accessed directly through the Royal Ulster Rifles Museum or Department of World Cultures, National Museums Scotland.

Production information:

Place: Tibet, Asia
Date: 1903-1904

Name Associations	Type	Note
1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles	regiment/service	
Bowen-Colthurst, John C.,	personal name	
Lieutenant (later Captain) (1880-1965)		

Associations	Type	Note
Younghusband Mission to Tibet (1903-1904)	event	

Bibliographic references

History of the Royal Irish Rifles (1860-1912) by Lieut.-Colonel George Beaton Laurie, see pp.332-338.

- Harris, Clare E. (2012) The Museum on the Roof of the World: Art, Politics, and the Representation of Tibet. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London.
Myatt, T. (2011) 'Trinkets, Temples, and Treasures: Tibetan Material Culture and the 1904 British Mission to Tibet' in Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines, No. 21