



The Fusilier Museum

WARWICK

Monthly E-Newsletter - August 2023



MUSEUM NEWS

HOW PARTNERSHIPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Welcome to the August edition of the museum e-newsletter. In the last issue we looked at learning partnerships, here, we explore more widely how collaborations can help the museum reach its goals.

Recently, the museum has been involved in several partnerships with successful outputs. One with Westgate Primary School is discussed in project news below. The museum also worked in partnership with different reenactor and living history groups who faithfully replicate uniforms and equipment from different periods of the regiment's history. These include the Royal Warwickshire Regiment Reenactment Group and The Royal Warwickshire Regiment 1914-18 Living History Group. Both these groups have been extraordinarily generous in giving time and energy to supporting the museum.

There have been two recent events where their contribution is noted: On 29th July the museum had a stall at Warwick Market to promote its summer holiday offer. A group of WW2 reenactors joined us to present an impressive array of equipment worn by a single soldier on the day of the D-Day landings. They really engaged the crowd which included the Mayor of Warwick, Councillor Oliver Jacques. The second event was Gallipoli Day on Saturday 12th August where WWI reenactors dressed as Gallipoli soldiers to support this well-attended event across the museum and Warwick Court House and a wreath-laying ceremony at Warwick's War Memorial. In each case the reenactors vividly brought to life soldiers of the past and actively promoted the rich history of the regiment.

The museum has also been working with web designer Elucidate on a new venture. Elucidate were commissioned to create a new website for the Fusilier Museum Warwick but discussions with their web designer Damien Maddalena led to a further project. Damien has been exploring the idea of virtual exhibitions and an opportunity arose to put this into action with a new temporary show at the museum called 'WWI Lives'. Two temporary exhibition cases were used to display around 25 objects exploring the experience of soldiers in war and the methods they used to deal with conflict. However, there were a further 30 more objects to tell this story that could not be displayed.

Damien created a virtual exhibition that is linked to the physical display by QR codes to create a wealth of additional material for visitors. This project is piloting how the limited physical space of the museum displays can be expanded into the almost infinite world of the internet to provide additional content to support the interests of different types of audiences.

The support the museum has received through different partnerships brings in new expertise and possibilities. We are extremely grateful to those who have given their time and energy to the museum's cause and look forward to more exciting collaborations in the future.

-Chris Kirby, General Manager



Bruce Bairnsfather original drawing 'Where did that one go?'

Published in *Fragments from France*, Bairnsfather was an officer in the Royal Warwicks and created the character OLD BILL. His humorous sketches of life in the trenches were published in the *Bystander* magazine under the title *Fragments from France*. As these cartoons became more popular postcards, pottery, jigsaws & books were produced for sale

Coping with War:
- Introduction
- Artefacts



CURRENT PROJECTS

The museum continues to manage different projects that will both enhance the access to the collections, promote the Regiment's story and provide opportunities to generate funding essential to the organisation's future.

NEW CHAIRS ARRIVE FOR THE BRANDWOOD ROOM!

Following the generous donations received towards the fit-out of the Brandwood Room, we have now taken receipt of ten new chairs which are suitable for formal functions including boardroom meetings and talks, as well as community activities.

Easily stackable, these attractively designed chairs follow the burgundy colour scheme of the museum carpet and display interpretation making them a welcome addition to the museum's facilities for both its own use and commercial hire. The flat-pack chairs now just need assembly with the help of a few willing and able volunteers!

The museum would also like to acknowledge here the Royal Warwickshire Regimental Association who have given funds from their General Purposes Trust and Brandwood Trust towards improvements in the museum's facilities.



Left: Andy assembling the new chairs. Top: Martin trying one out!

WEST MIDLANDS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT GIVE GRANT FOR BUILDING BRIDGES PROJECT

The museum is delighted to announce that it has been successful in being awarded a grant of £1,800 to support the Building Bridges project from the West Midlands Museum Development Small Grant Scheme!

The funding will support a pilot project with a local school - Westgate Primary - to develop three distinct learning sessions all linked to the history of the regiment and the museum collections. We are currently sourcing a museum learning consultant to lead the training of staff and volunteers in the delivery of workshops as well as to evaluate the pilot sessions for effective student learning.

The grant will also allow the museum to commission an electronic brochure for primary schools to promote the learning sessions the museum can offer. The objective is to kickstart the relationship with primary schools following almost a two-year closure at St. John's House and the move of the museum to a new site.

As outlined in the July edition, the museum is seeking to reestablish links with schools in the Warwick area to provide outreach sessions such as assemblies & regular school workshops in the museum. The initial focus is on primary schools with a target of raising £3,000 towards training and learning resource development.



Westgate Student Visit

If you can donate at least £10 to the BUILDING BRIDGES LEARNING PROJECT to help the Fusilier Museum Warwick to create effective learning sessions for regional primary schools, then please donate and make a difference - <https://fusiliermuseumwarwick.com/support>

OBJECT OF THE MONTH

Each e-newsletter, we will ask someone to choose an object from the collection to tell its story and what it means to them. Chris Tipping, a volunteer in the museum, discusses a WWI German digging tool on display in the museum.

GERMAN ENTRENCHING TOOL, 1917 1960.286

A standard piece of the German soldier's equipment, the entrenching tool in the museum collection has been brought back as a memento of a hard-fought battle on the Western Front in 1917. The new owner has taken great care to inscribe the names of the places which were linked to his battalion's advance. The skill in execution of the writing on the spade may suggest the soldier was a sign-writer or painter/decorator in civilian life.

Of the six battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment to have fought in the 1917 Battles of Arras (also known as the First, Second and Third Battles of the Scarpe), only the First Battalion was present at the places mentioned. As part of the 4th Division 1/RWR came from Maroeuil, north-west of Arras, marching through the suburb of St Catherine in sleet and snow to their assembly area at St Nicholas, just a few miles north of the infamous Hindenberg Line. They were to make their advance at around noon on 9th April, passing through (so as to maintain momentum) the 9th (Scottish) Division who had taken the villages of St Laurent-Blangy and Athies earlier in the morning.

On then to Fampoux where some of the fallen Warwickshires now lie in Level Crossing Cemetery. Although the village of Feuchy lies to the south of the Warwickshire's advance, they had to navigate a defensive position here known to the British as the Wancourt-Feuchy Line, hence its inclusion on the spade. Thus the 1/RWR had participated in capturing ground of over three and a half miles, the greatest distance in a single day up to that point in the war.

From then on, fortune ceased to look favourably on the British at Arras; the Germans brought up extensive reserves and the British were advancing over a wasteland of largely their own making.

The last place name on the spade is one remembered with dread by many combatants who served there- that of the notorious Chemical Works at Roeux. The 4th Division had been withdrawn from trenches in front of Roeux on 11th April after a disastrous attack and were to return on 3rd May to renew the advance over open ground in full view of the German defences. The Chemical Works was in fact an old dye factory surrounded by a series of blockhouses and a nearby chateau. Many units had been rotated through this maelstrom, capturing the area only to lose it again to the inevitable German counter-attack on numerous occasions.

It wasn't until the final capture of the position on 11th May by components of 4th Division that the reason for this became apparent- the Chemical Works, chateau and surrounding buildings were all linked by tunnels, thus allowing the Germans to re-occupy sites previously lost and enfilade the attackers.

Therefore this ordinary spade holds the names of locations, some of which were captured at a heavy price and were held in reverence by the soldier of 1/RWR who brought it back when he returned from the fields of France; a personal and poignant memorial to the battalion's endeavours and sacrifice as sacred as any cast in bronze or carved in stone.



Above: The spade at the museum. Below: A view of the dreaded Chemical Works.

VISITOR NEWS

Andrew Adams tells the remarkable story of Major Frank Sims, an officer in the regiment who escaped from an Italian prisoner-of-war camp at the time of the Italian Armistice.

This 8th September will be the 80th anniversary of the Italian armistice with the Allies in 1943, taking the Italian Army out of the war but unfortunately for Italy not bringing peace. When Italy surrendered there were more than 50,000 Allied prisoners of war (POWs) in camps the length and breadth of the country. Despite the order from London to stay put in their camps and despite the fast action of the Germans to round up and deport POWs to Germany, thousands scattered into the autumnal countryside. To their surprise and gratitude they found yesterday's enemy today's courageous and generous friend. It was above all the Italian peasant farmers, sharecroppers and charcoal burners of the mountains who shared scarce food and clothing, humble shelter and the risk of death or deportation to help the escapers. They saw in the stream of awkward soldiery stumbling along their mountain tracks a common humanity; human beings in need.

One of those soldiers was Maj. Frank Simms of the Royal Warwickshires and Long-Range Desert Group (LRDG), a seasoned escaper and seeker after adventure who jumped from a German transport taking him from Gavi, the Italian "Colditz" for recaptured escapers to a train for Germany. A Regular, Simms had served in the Sudan and Ethiopia against the Italians and with the LRDG in Libya on raids deep behind enemy lines, on one of which he was wounded and captured. Sent to a POW camp in Padula monastery in the heel of Italy Simms soon organised a tunnel and a mass breakout by thirteen escapers. All were recaptured. When Simms jumped from the German lorry he was 500 miles from the nearest Allied forces.

To cover that 500 miles on foot over mountains required grit, daring and physical toughness as well as the essential help of local people. Simms had the first three and like so many was lucky in the fourth. He was joined along his journey by a fellow Gavi-escaper, Peter Medd Lt Cdr RN and their story as they made their way down Italy stands for many in its dramatic cast of improbable, but real, characters and also in the awakening it shows in two confident officers of the Empire to the beauty of Italy and the dignity of the once underestimated Italian poor.

Andrew Adams' talk on Simms' and Medd's story "The Long Walk Home" and on the Italians who helped them will be at 2pm on 9th September at the Museum. **To book tickets go to Eventbrite by clicking here.** Andrew will also be signing copies of the book 'The Long Walk Home'.



REGIMENTAL STORIES

Honouring the enduring legacy of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, formed on April 23, 1968.



On Friday, 4th August 2023, the moving and poignant ceremony took place to rename a road in memory of Sergeant Simon Valentine in his home town of Bedworth, Warwickshire.

Comprising a number of prayers, readings and memories, the event was attended by many family and friends including many of his Regimental comrades: these included Brigadier Jo Butterfil, OBE MC who was his Company Commander, Major Chris Danby, his Platoon Commander and ex-WO2 Wayne Caffrey who was his Company Sergeant Major, all of whom took part in the Service and who served with Sergeant Valentine in Afghanistan in August 2009 during that lethal tour.

Sergeant Valentine was one of four Fusiliers killed in the same incident. His fallen comrades include Lance Corporal James Fullarton (from Coventry, Warwickshire), Fusilier Louis Carter (from Nuneaton, Warwickshire), and Fusilier Simon Annis (from Salford in Lancashire).

Sergeant Simon Valentine Way is the result of 14 years of lobbying and hard work by family,

The Regiment and the local authority and is the road along which the town's Armistice Day parade marches every 11th November, irrespective of the day of the week on which that date falls.



Simon's mother, Carol Valentine, unveiled the road sign in his honour.



Photos of Simon from Carol Valentine via Forces.net

A Heritage of Valour



On 1 August 1759 the Battle of Minden was fought during the Seven Years' War, when Great Britain was allied with Prussia against France and Austria. The French outnumbered the Allies by over 10,000 and had 10,000 cavalry. As a result of a misunderstanding, the British infantry advanced with drums beating towards the enemy cavalry. Despite devastating artillery fire they closed ranks, repulsed a cavalry charge at point blank range and destroyed a second line of cavalry with volleys. They threw back four more enemy brigades and thwarted a final attack by fresh French cavalry. This was the final turning point of the battle. Tradition has it that the British infantry wore in their hats, roses they plucked on their way to battle. This is the background to the Regiment's custom of wearing red & yellow roses in their hats and decorating the drums with them on Minden Day.



'I never thought to see a single line of infantry break through three lines of cavalry ranked in order of battle, and tumble them to ruin'.

-French Marshal Contades

MUSEUM EVENTS FOR 2023

Here is a list of museum events for the rest of 2023.
Make sure to get them into your calendar!

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS
8-17 SEPTEMBER 2023

Heritage Open Days 2023

8th - 17th September 2023

To celebrate this national event, the museum is putting on a number of special events.

HOD23: Be a War Cartoonist!

10am - 5pm Saturday 9th September

For this day only, admission to the museum will be free!

Inspired by a display of original cartoons by WW1 regimental officer Bruce Bairnsfather, visitors are invited to draw their own cartoons linked to the theme of soldiers' lives. These will be later displayed in the museum!



HOD23: The Long Walk Home

2pm - 3pm Saturday 9th September

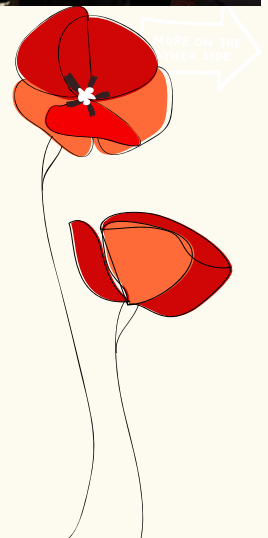
A special talk by Andrew Adams on the remarkable escape of WW2 regimental officer Frank Simms in wartime Italy. Tickets are £6 and can be [booked HERE!](#)



HOD23: Animals in World War 1

2pm - 3pm Saturday 16th September

There will be a special talk on the role of animals in the First World War - from glow worms to pigeons with cameras. This is free to all visitors who buy a ticket to the museum on the day or already have a 12 month ticket.



A Soldier's Tale

10am - 5pm, Saturday 28th October 2023

Marking the beginning of the autumn half term, a day of exciting events in the museum, including reenactors presentations in the museum looking at the life of the soldier.

Armistice Day

12 - 4pm, Sunday 12th November

A special presentation at the museum marking Remembrance Day or Armistice Day following the laying of the wreaths at the Warwick War Memorial

Come visit us!!

A CALL FOR RATINGS



In this digital age, online reviews are very important to drawing visitors to museums.

The museum was very happy to have created a new visitor page on Tripadvisor for our new location at Pageant House - but we need more reviews to get us up in the rankings!

If you have enjoyed your visit to the museum and would like to help us attract new visitors, we invite you to share your experiences with others on our [new Tripadvisor page - follow the link here!](#) Every bit of positive feedback helps.



are needed to write online reviews!



FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM TALKS

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2023

P.J. PRETORIUS & THE SMS KONIGSBERG



Peter Griffiths,
Chair, East Rand Military Historical Society

2 PM London Time
Saturday, 30 September

DUNKIRK



Maj. David Seeney
Vice Chair, Friends of the Fusilier Museum Warwick

2 PM London Time
Saturday, 28 October

1/WARWICKS FROM THE MARNE TO THE AISNE IN 1914



Jonathan Davy
Secretary, Friends of the Fusilier Museum Warwick

2 PM London Time
Saturday, 25 November

JOIN THE FRIENDS

The Friends support the museum and its mission of preserving regimental history and also promote education and activities for history lovers, both online and locally. All are welcome to join!

To learn more, contact us at friends.fusiliermuseumwarwick@gmail.com

VISIT THE MUSEUM

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