



The Fusilier Museum

WARWICK

Monthly E-Newsletter - September 2023



MUSEUM NEWS



UNLOCKING FAMILY HISTORY

Welcome to the September edition of the museum e-newsletter and hope you all had an enjoyable summer. As the autumn season comes upon us it feels like a perfect time for personal reflection and contemplation. It is possibly for this reason that over the last few weeks the museum has experienced a particularly high number of visitor enquiries about family relations who served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Such investigations brighten our day – particularly for my colleague David Baynham who relishes the detective work that can help unlock a previously unknown chapter of someone’s family history.

These enquiries are a reminder that the museum is less an official history of major conflicts and ceremonial traditions – although these themes play their part – but more a collective mass of unique and sometimes extraordinary stories about people. In this issue we explore how the museum is a rich resource for unlocking personal family histories and will showcase a number of examples that have come to light through recent visitor enquiries and also research in the collections (see object of the month).

Some of our visitors have been associated with particularly notable soldiers of the regiment. Several months ago, for example, we were visited by Tony Lucie-Smith, a cousin of Euan Lucie-Smith, the first commissioned officer of mixed heritage (Anglo-Jamaican) to enlist in the British Army during WWI and sadly also the first to die. There was a particularly poignant moment when Sally Brewer visited the museum to look at the medals of her grandfather Lieutenant E.C. Farmer was delighted to see them displayed, including his Military Cross, in the gallantry section of the World War One case.

Why is the museum so good at unlocking these stories of the past? A big part of it is down to David who, with 20 years plus experience, has both the historical knowledge but also the expertise to navigate the sometimes-cryptic official records. It is also that the museum holds records that do not exist anywhere else and with a bit of luck (and that is always an important factor in successful research) contain some valuable snippet that can illuminate a past life.

A phrase we hear again and again in the museum from people wanting to know more about their relation’s service in the regiment is that “he never wanted to talk about it.” The devastating events many of these soldiers experience easily explains why but it also likely that after war these soldiers simply wanted to rebuild their lives and move on.

The museum’s research service can unlock a chapter of family history that has lain hidden for many generations. In many cases this can instil a sense of pride and appreciation from the surviving family relations of their father, grandfather, uncle, or great uncle as well as add a little more to the Regiment’s history as a whole.

–Chris Kirby, General Manager



Above: Tony Lucie Smith



Above: Sally Brewer



Above: Brigadier Adrian Wise’s sons.

Right: Cathie & Clancy Wilson



Have any research enquiries? Please contact us at enquiries@fusiliermuseumwarwick.com

www.fusiliermuseumwarwick.com

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.

BUILDING BRIDGES PROJECT UPDATE!

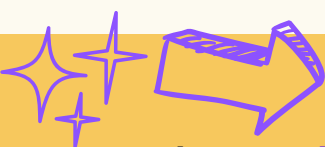
Now that a pilot project to reconnect the museum with local schools has been generously funded by the West Midlands Museums Development Small Grant scheme, staff are getting busy preparing with project partner Westgate Primary School.

Three very different learning sessions have been created:

- 1) One will compare and contrast the lives of three soldiers of the regiment from different periods of history
- 2) a second will look at the role of marching songs in the army, and
- 3) a third will explore why the design of uniforms changed over time.

Being created for Primary schools, these sessions need to be very hands-on and to help in this we have purchased replicas for the students to handle. These include a film prop WW2 'steel helmet', an 18th century tricorne hat, and a Field Marshal Montgomery beret with badges.

The pilot learning sessions will be delivered in October and November and after that a schools' brochure created to promote the museum's learning offers to schools across the region.



FUTURE PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE

There are **three key projects** the museum wants to deliver over the next couple of years to support its mission to reach wider audiences, to offer a quality experience and prove financially sustainable:

1. Improving the museum experience for Blind and Visual Impaired Visitors

Following a visit by Martin Parker from Warwickshire Vision to the new museum, it was apparent that improvements could be made to support visitors who were blind or with visual impairment. These could include improved lighting and gallery navigation; tactile models and handling objects trails in the galleries and audio-description options for key items on display.



2. The Building Bridges Learning Project - Part 2

There will be pilot projects with local secondary schools on the lines of the present work with Westgate Primary. We will also look to get learning tablets to support school sessions in the museum. Additional handling collections and replica material such as uniforms will greatly enhance the learning experience.

3. Making the Brandwood Room a High-Quality Hiring Venue

With generous support from public donations, the Brandwood Room is now fitted with blinds and furniture to offer an adequate facility for meetings, talks and activities. To make it attractive as a hire venue, we need to improve the audio-visual equipment offer with a large screen high resolution television and also possibly also higher speed fibre optic WI-FI.



Martin Parker

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

Museum volunteer Chris Cox explores the role of the Royal Warwickshire regiment on the first day of Operation Overlord inspired by a steel helmet which saw active service in the Normandy campaign.

WW2 STEEL HELMET OWNED BY COLOUR SERGEANT TURNER R2015.58

This helmet was worn by Colour Sergeant Ernest Muncaster Turner 5127462, who served in B Coy, 1/7th Battalion, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He received a serious shrapnel wound to the head from enemy mortar fire in Normandy 1944, he survived and went on to serve with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment after the war. 1/7th Battalion landed in Normandy in late June in time to support Operation Charnwood on 7th/8th July and was eventually disbanded on 21st August, with most serving officers and other ranks being absorbed into the 2nd Battalion due to the losses incurred since they had landed on 6th June.



D-Day - 6th June 1944, Having first departed from Camp J8 near Lindfield on the 3rd June, the troops of the 2nd Battalion The Royal Warwickshire regiment finally set sail late in the evening of 5th June from Newhaven with the rest of 185th Brigade within Task Force S, the naval invasion fleet heading for Sword Beach. There was no going back. Lt. Kingston Adams of A Coy 2Bn RWR on LCI 315 recalled: "The ship was rocking and rolling and a good number of them very ill... I went up on deck to take air a few times and it was an amazing site - a huge armada..... Tried to get each man to eat something, but it was the devil's own game - poor chaps".

The aerial attack of the defences along the Atlantic wall commenced at 0300 shortly followed by the Navy, anchored 7 miles out to sea, began their bombardment of the Norman Coast at 0330. At 0510 the RAF provided low flying aircraft to lay a defensive smoke screen for the incoming Task Force S. At 0530 men began to emerge on the deck of their transport craft to begin the arduous task of boarding the smaller and lighter Landing Craft Infantry.

And then with dawn upon them, the LCI's embarked towards land. The assault brigade led the way, with the dubious honour of being the first to the beach going to the 1Bn South Lancashire on Queen White and 2Bn East Yorkshire Regiment on Queen Red at 0725. As the assault troops set down on the sand, the soldiers of the intermediate brigade begin to load onto LCI's themselves starting their own passage to shore. At 0955 the 2nd Bn Royal Warwickshire Regiment set foot on Norman sand, recorded in the Battalion War Diary as 'touch down time'.

OBJECT OF THE MONTH

Lt Harry Illing A Coy, 2Bn RWR, later recorded: "We could see spouts of water shoot up as enemy bombs and shells fell into the sea and small clouds of black and white smoke rise up as the enemy fire came down on the beaches..... Nothing hit our craft as we raced in, but other companies were not so lucky."

The LCI manned by C company hit a mine as it beached and was also hit by German artillery fire. D Companies LCI suffered damage as the men disembarked when both ramparts were shot away.

Under mortar and sniper fire from the French homes along the promenade, there was a great deal of confusion, but whilst a small number of casualties were inflicted, the majority of the battalion made it ashore.

Captain Peter Batt, adjutant 2Bn RWR, seconded to 3Div HQ, spoke at the D-Day commemorative service in 1995 at St Mary's Church Warwick: "We waded ashore, picking our way through the casualties, dodging the snipers who were having a field day".

Making their way from the beaches, explosions and incoming fire were continuous, but the men were not at that time under direct fire. By 1130 the battalion (4 companies and Battalion HQ) had made it to the assembly point in the cemetery between Lion-Sur Mer and Hermanville-sur-Mer.

After a very short period of rest, the cemetery soon erupted as A & C Coy received incoming enemy fire. Under sniper and heavier machine gun fire from German positions to the West, some dozen casualties were suffered at this point.

In a change to the original plans of the day, the battalion was ordered to advance along the axis Colleville Sur Orne - Benouville - Blainville. Having been found to be occupied by the enemy, A Coy successfully launched an attack on Benouville at 1830. In order to support the defence of the bridges over the Orne, D Coy was ordered to take over the positions of the Airborne Division. The remainder of the Battalion then pushed on towards Blainville.

Lt Illing remembered: "Evening was almost upon us as we pushed forward from the burning village.... It was now quite dark, and we reconnoitred forward to select our position. As the recce party moved down a side track one member flung himself to the ground and opened fire; we followed suit. Luckily our blow got home first. A German recce party evidently on the same job as ourselves had come off second best. We dug in and settled down for the night..."

Captain Peter Batt: "At nightfall we had got finally into trenches, and many of us offered a silent prayer for our survival".

The battalion made camp for the night on the outskirts of Blainville. At this point, the close of D-Day, 6th June 1944 the battalion had suffered 4 killed and 35 wounded.



VISITOR NEWS

The following are recent case studies of visitor research enquiries dealt with by David Baynham and the information they presented.

David Brown – a Father and Uncle in the Birmingham Pals

David Brown was one only one generation removed from two Birmingham Pals of the Great War. Phillip S. Brown was David's father, Frederic was his uncle. Phillip served with the 15th Battalion and Frederic the 14th Battalion. They are both in Book of Honour as Lance Corporals (L/Cpl), although they later became Sergeants. Both were reported in Birmingham Post.

Phillip was wounded on 23 July 1916, the day after an attack near High Wood and Wood Lane on The Somme. The Battalion War Diary said the unit was bringing in wounded and dead, but also that it was shelled. David brought in a piece of metal, believed to be a shell fragment taken from his father's arm. Although David is an experienced Ancestry user, he was not that familiar with the military documents and so hadn't seen the Silver War Badge (SWB) List or Medal Index Card.

Frederic was killed on 30 July 1916 in another attack in The Somme offensive. There was a more extensive War Diary account, along with an Appendix entry. David Brown was emailed the Medal Index Card & Medal Rolls of Frederic. They then looked at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) site, where it was found that as with the medal records Frederic is spelled with a 'k' on the first name.

It was explained to David that if he had enough documentation CWGC could change the headstone inscription. David was also advised about grave consolidation & families adding personal captions.



VISITOR NEWS

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Emma Butler-King granddaughter of MM winner Colour Sergeant WW Frost



Emma is the granddaughter of CSM WW Frost MM, whose medal group she is holding in the picture. He won the Military Medal in the attack on Leeste, on the edge of Bremen in April 1945. How Sergeant Frost won his MM is described in the History of The Royal Warwickshire Regiment 1919-1955 by Marcus Cunliffe: 'Early in the attack he (Frost) was blown into the air by a shell which burst very close to him.



In spite of the fact that his right arm and side were incapacitated he continued on and, although in great pain, fought his platoon right up to the objective, killing 12 Germans and capturing 15 more. For this gallant action he was granted the immediate award of a Military Medal."

Walter Frost was born in Coventry in November 1911, one of seven children. At 18 he joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment serving in Egypt then India. After a temporary transfer to the Worcestershire Regiment he served with them in Burma in 1942. He returned to the 2nd Battalion of the RWR to train in Scotland for renewed operations in Europe and landed in Normandy on D-Day to advance with the regiment across France, Holland, and Germany.

On 15th April Sgt Frost commanded a platoon as part of the assault on Leeste, six miles south of Bremen in Germany. His inspired bravery meant the whole platoon overwhelmed the enemy without pause. His Military Medal was presented to him by Field Marshal Montgomery in the field. Fifty years on from D-Day, Walter Frost was awarded with the Normandy Medal by the French.

Sometime before, Walter had lost the ability to speak but amazingly on his return from France after meeting up with a fellow Military Medal winner Sgt Maj 'Buck' Jones of the 2nd Battalion now residing at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, Walter started to talk constantly about his trip to France. Walter died two days after his 85th birthday on 5th November 1996.

VISITOR NEWS - Family Research Service

Museum Assistant David Baynham explains what the museum can offer for family research enquiries.

One of the nice parts of working in a Regimental Museum is that for a number of our visitors "it is personal". They are not coming for an abstract sense of history, but to find out about a member of their family.

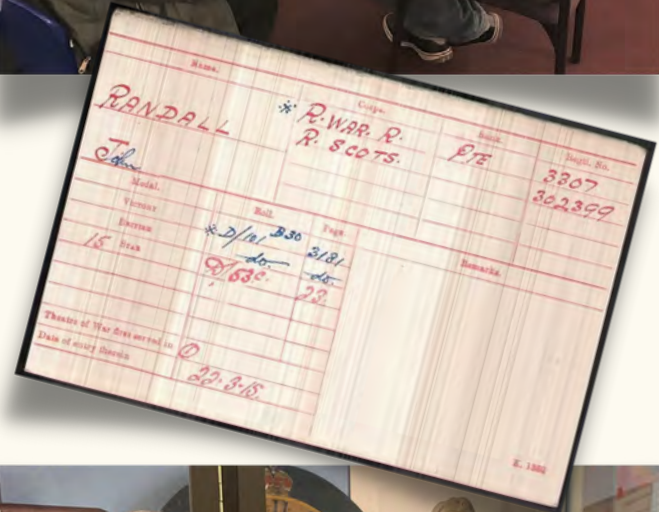
This involves providing a connection between the questions that people ask and the available material. Most people don't come in and ask, "Do you have a book on 143 Brigade?" They enquire, "Can you tell me what my relative did in WW1?" In this case I spotted that their relative was in a first line Territorial battalion, explained what that was and then what sources of information exist about the individual soldier and the unit he served with.

Often, I will interpret documents which the customer has found, like this Medal Index Card. They probably won't look at the date he got to France and realise it was the day certain RWR battalions arrived. Similarly they may not realise that those Battalions left the Western Front in November 1917, meaning that he must have moved to the Royal Scots before then if he didn't serve elsewhere. While somebody might find material on a genealogy website, they need to know what documents to look for and what those tell them. That needs a certain background knowledge and is where I can be rather helpful.

That knowledge extends to websites people might not look for, like the WW1 PoW site, The Gazette, or even the Government website. In theory customers might have been able to do this for themselves. But there are also things you can't find with a Google Search. The Wikipedia page for 143 Brigade doesn't have 'By God They Can Fight' in the two-book bibliography section.

In the case of what the Regiment did, there is often much more in books and documents than is online. The museum holds material that is hard to get elsewhere, such as Regimental Journals: The Antelope and The Fusilier; out of print books like Black Square Memories, By God They Can Fight, and City of Coventry Roll of the Fallen; Ledger Books of men who joined between the wars; and Battalion War Diaries.

Only one of the three books I named there has a title that suggests what it is about, showing that one needs to know what to look for.



REGIMENTAL STORIES

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



Simon Valentine

James Fullarton

Louis Carter

Shaun Bush

WARWICKSHIRE LADS

For this month's regimental story, we would simply like to pay tribute to four courageous soldiers of the 2nd Bn Royal Regiment of Fusiliers from Warwickshire who sacrificed their lives in 2009 while fighting in Afghanistan.

- Sergeant Simon Valentine (Bedworth, Warwickshire)
- Lance Corporal James Fullarton (Coventry, Warwickshire)
- Fusilier Louis Carter (Nuneaton, Warwickshire)
- Fusilier Shaun Bush (Coventry, Warwickshire)



"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."

-Thomas Campbell, Hallowed Ground

THE FUSILIERS – FOREVER ENGLAND, FOREVER FRIENDS, FOREVER FAMILY

MUSEUM EVENTS FOR 2023

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



A Soldier's Tale

10am – 5pm, Saturday 28th October 2023

Marking the beginning of the autumn half term, a day of exciting activities in the museum, including reenactors presentations, storytelling, and a Friend's talk on Dunkirk - all exploring the soldier's tale.



Armistice Day



12 – 4pm, Sunday 12th November

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

Victorian Evening

3pm – 9pm Thursday 30th November

In conjunction with the Friends of the Museum there will be a special museum stall in Warwick Market as well as a sponsored Regimental Christmas Tree in the St. Mary's Christmas Tree exhibition.





Bobby's Summer Travels



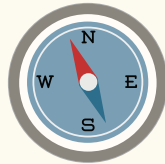
The regimental mascot, Bobby the Indian Black Buck Antelope has been a powerful symbol of identity for the regiment for several hundred years. The Bobby stuffed toy the museum sells in its shop is a fitting reminder of this beautiful animal as it appeared dressed in its special coat in the regiment's ceremonies. This summer, Bobby has been travelling around the UK visiting sites of historical interest and posting mystery locations on social media. We present here some of the highlights of Bobby's tour.



The Sherman tank recovered from the sea off Slapton Sands in south Devon originally lost during Exercise Tiger, the rehearsal for D-Day. Sadly, German E-boats surprised the tank landing craft leading to hundreds of American servicemen losing their lives.



The Slapton Monument - a memorial from the US army to the local people of the Slapton area. This was dedicated to the villages of the South Hams who in 1943 were given six weeks' notice to leave their homes so troops could practice for D-Day in secret.



A cannon cast in 1826 at the post of Dartmouth in south Devon. Between 1942-44, the 15th Motor Gun Boat Flotilla ran clandestine operations from here to support the French resistance and escaping airmen shot down over Nazi Europe.



Framlingham Castle in Suffolk. Originally built as a Norman Motte and Bailey and owned by the Earls and Dukes of Norfolk, Framlingham Castle was the meeting point on 12th July 1553 for the armed forces of Mary Tudor as she prepared to take the throne from Lady Jane Grey.





Bobby's Summer Travels



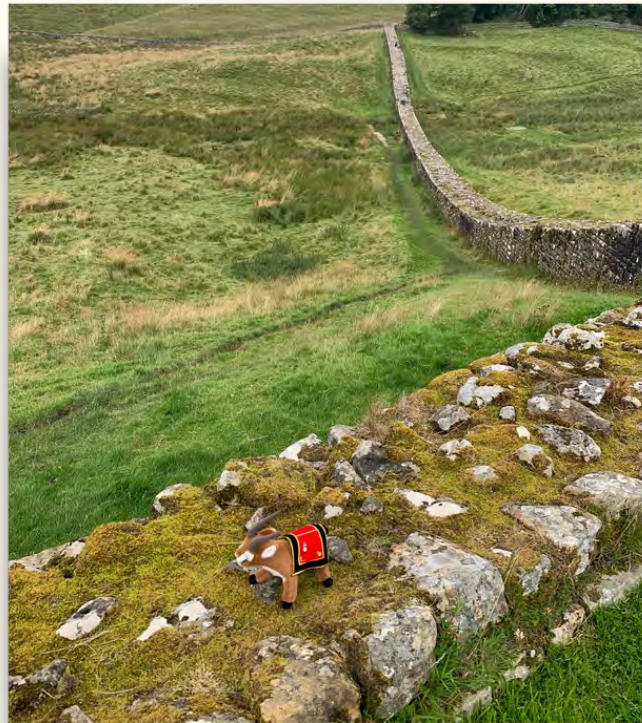
Whitby Abbey, in North Yorkshire, dominated by the 13th century Benedictine church. The site came under attack from the German battlecruiser Derfflinger at 9am on 16th December 1914. One direct hit destroyed much of the west front of the church.



The Commemorative Arch in Hexham in Northumberland dedicated to the 4th Northumberland Fusiliers (Territorial Force) in France and Belgium during the War 1915-18.



A section of Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland. This Roman military structure marked the boundary between the Roman province of Britannia and the indigenous tribes to the north. Commissioned by the Emperor Hadrian in AD122, the wall had regular turrets, milecastles and strategically placed forts to control the surrounding area.



Bobby makes it to Edinburgh! The famous castle was rebuilt and greatly enhanced during the period that the regiment later called the Sixth Regiment of Foot were in Scotland helping to subdue the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745-46. Alas, Bobby missed the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at the castle but better luck next year!

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.



FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM TALKS

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2023

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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