



The Fusilier Museum

WARWICK

Newsletter | January 2026



Welcome to 2026 at the museum!

A Happy New Year to all our readers. We hope the public programme we have put together for 2026 will be of interest to a broad audience. The exhibitions and events being presented focus on the lives and experiences of soldiers spanning over 120 years from the Victorian era until the present day. These will reveal stories from both war and peacetime picking up on the changes that have occurred in soldiering over the last century but the traditions and practices that still remain.

NEWS BULLETIN

- **Partnership with the Embroiderers' Guild UK:** following the cataloguing, conserving and repacking of the regimental textile collection in 2025, there will be a new exhibition to showcase a series of striking embroideries produced by soldiers of the regiment during the Victorian period. Little is known about the processes by which these very individual and colourful works were created. The museum is partnering with the Embroiders' Guild UK on a series of talks to look at the history of embroidery and specifically the work made by soldiers. See: fusiliermuseumwarwick.com/explore/whats-on
- **Battlefield Tour:** the museum has officially launched a new venture for 2026 – a battlefield tour led by experienced historian and guide, Jon Davy. This first tour in May 2026 will follow in the footsteps of Royal Warwickshire Regimental soldiers on the Western Front. Jon will be looking to provide specific information for those researching WW1 relations. More tours will be planned for 2027, so look out for details soon. See fusiliermuseumwarwick.com/news
- **New look Friends organisation:** following the decision mentioned in the last newsletter, to bring the Friends organisation within the museum trust, we now have a new logo and brochure which includes additional membership benefits. These include regular updates on behind-the-scenes stories and two social events in the year themed around military and family history. See: fusiliermuseumwarwick.com/support/friends-of-the-museum



Looking for a volunteer opportunity in 2026?

The museum is always on the lookout for new volunteers to join its fantastic team. If you are looking for new experiences in 2026 and interested in working at the museum, please contact general.manager@fusiliermuseumwarwick.com



2026 Programme – A Closer Look

In each newsletter we will be giving a preview of the exhibitions and events coming up over the following months. For this issue, we look at the programme connected to the vividly coloured embroideries made by Victorian soldiers of the regiment in India and possibly elsewhere. We also investigate the creation of the greatest military honour from this period, the Victoria Cross.

Exhibition: Following Threads – Exploring Regimental Embroidery in the Victorian Age

28th January – 11th April, 2026

Museum volunteer, Janet Ainley, curates a selection of mounted Victorian embroideries made by soldiers of the regiment, providing a wider context of what life was like for these men stationed in outposts of the British Empire. Although individually created, in most cases these works present similar compositions containing key elements of the regiment's identity and ceremony – the regimental colours, the antelope emblem, the drums and bugles and heraldic plants. In some cases, a photo of a soldier exists in the centre of the works suggesting that some at least played a memorial role. Although little has been published about such works, Janet will explore the place such needlework pieces played for soldiers of the regiment and speculate how the practice of their creation began. In several cases, she will be able to present a background history of the men who created these works. The exhibition will be supported with uniforms, photos and diary accounts setting the scene for the life lived by soldiers of the Victorian regiment in India and South Africa.



Talks event: History of Embroidery

28th February 2026

Through partnership with the Embroiderers' Guild UK, there will be a special talks event looking at the wider history of embroidery and more specifically regimental embroidery. Dr Penny Hill, who is Deputy Chair of the Embroiderers' Guild, will draw upon the rich collections held by that organisation to demonstrate the changing fashions and techniques of embroidery over the last 1000 years until the use of digital technology today. This will set the context for Janet Ainley's talk on the regimental embroideries displayed in the temporary exhibition. Additional embroideries from the reserve collection will be brought out for Janet's presentation which will consider the questions of how they were produced, what they functioned as and where they were displayed. In considering this, the speaker hopes to reveal something of the personal world occupied by these soldiers policing the frontiers of the British Empire.

Live Online Talks Event: Victorian Embroidery with Reference to Soldiers' Embroidery

14 March 2026

In another partnership event with the Embroiderers' Guild, Lucy Barter looks specifically at Victorian embroidery comparing that made in a domestic setting to military insignia created by soldiers. This presentation will place the museum's collection in relationship with wider practice of this popular craft in the Victorian period.

Talk: How were Victoria Crosses made? – New Research

21st March 2026

Former army officer and archaeologist, Dr Andrew Marriott has conducted significant research that challenges the long-held belief that Victoria Crosses were only made from Russian cannon captured in the Crimean War. Using X-ray fluorescence (XRF), Dr Marriott has uncovered a much more complex picture showing that different metals were used and shows how they can act as a tool to provide provenance and authenticity in the analysis of individual Victoria Crosses.

Pack up your VPK in your Old Kit Bag and Smile, Smile, Smile

by Graham Roberts



The Mexican-American War (1846 -1848) was the first conflict to be captured in photographs, followed by the Crimean War (1853 - 1858) and the American Civil War (1861 - 1865). Taken by official photographers, the images that documented these landmark conflicts were censored before publication. The First World War was captured through many different types of photography, from official war records on land, sea and air to personal mementos.

When going to fight on foreign shores, apart from the usual items in his kitbag, the British Tommy may have packed an unofficial item to record his adventures and experiences while in service. This was the compact Vest Pocket Kodak camera (VPK).

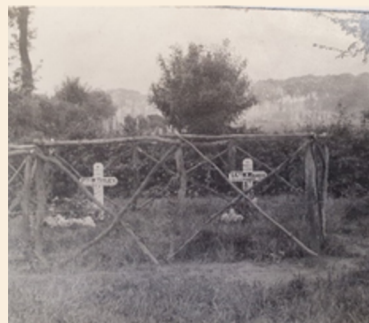
Kodak had introduced its 'new Vest Pocket Kodak' to the world in 1912. "This wonderfully compact little camera... is always ready for action" was its marketing slogan.

Using a type of 127 film and measuring just 1 x 2 3/8 x 4 3/4 inches (2.5 x 6 x 12cm) and weighing nine ounces (255g), it was not much bigger than today's smartphones and became an immediate hit with amateur photographers, who were looking for a compact, portable and easy-to-operate camera.

The VPK could be carried easily in a breast/waistcoat pocket and represented excellent value for money. By 1914, annual sales of the VPK in Britain reached over 5,500. It is estimated that one officer in five took a Kodak camera to war with the BEF. **Continued below** ≡



By 30th December 1914 the story of the unofficial Christmas truce had reached Britain through letters home to loved ones, some were sent to local newspapers. The above is an uncensored photo which appeared in the Daily Mirror on 8th January 1915. The Royal Warwickshire Regiment witnessed the Christmas truce, relieving the Dublin Fusiliers on Christmas Eve.



The graves of Private Walter Tittle and lance Corporal William Walker. Tittle died 29th April 1915 aged 29yrs and Walker died 30th April 1915 aged 34yrs. Both are buried at Trois Arbres Cemetery Steenwerck France



Soldiers of the RWR in the trenches on the Douve as part of the 2nd Battle of Ypres. The Corporal with the pipe is cleaning a 1907 hooked Quillon bayonet, designed for close combat. This could be attached to the SMLE Rifle (held by the soldier on the left).



The 1st Bn RWR in the trenches. Note some men are wearing the 1908 pattern webbing and some are wearing the "Cor Blimey" winter cap, issued to troops in 1915 and designed with a neck curtain which could be unfolded for warmth, covering both the ears and neck.



In Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand it was actually marketed as 'The Soldier's Camera' and in France 'Le Kodak du Soldat'.

Photographs using the VPK were taken during the army's retreat from Mons and the battles of the Marne and Aisne (1914). Some of these photos found their way into national newspapers. The first uncensored action photo of the war appeared in the War Illustrated on 21st November 1914 depicting a wounded officer and 1st battalion of the Middlesex regiment under artillery fire. Triggering concerns of potential intelligence and propaganda value should these images fall into enemy hands, the British Army employed a General Routine Order which prohibited the possession of a camera on active service. It seems this was ignored, wasn't sent to the majority of the regiments or may have been issued to those already in France and Belgium but not to those in transit to war. Fortunately for posterity, soldiers continued to document the most iconic images from the war, such as the Gallipoli landings, training for the front, life in the trenches and camaraderie amongst the troops.

In 1915 Kodak introduced the Autographic model, featuring a camera back with an area through which notes could be written onto carbon paper between the film and backing paper. The photographer could lift the hinged flap and using the stylus 'autograph' information onto the negative, allowing the user to record names of comrades, villages, places and trenches.



Hospital wounded, Officers and location unknown. The patient with crutches and the officer behind with head wound both wear armbands which possibly indicate they are convalescent patients.



A London Bus type B model in Oulstersten near Meteren. Some 1,000 buses were requisitioned by the British army in 1914 to serve as transport for troops, also as ambulances and pigeon lofts, in Britain France, Belgium and other theatres of war



An example of how the stylus was used.



Another new invention, the Periscope Rifle. The rifle was fitted to a heavy wooden frame and allowed the user to observe the enemy's actions and fire unobserved from a trench. It has been recorded that Lance Corporal Beech of the Australian Light Horse invented and first used a periscope rifle in May 1915 at Gallipoli, however it was being used on the Western Front before that date.



Captain Martin displaying the new P helmet or Tube helmet gas mask, introduced in July 1915. Gas was first used by the Germans on April 22nd during the 2nd battle of Ypres. One such mask is on display at the Fusilier Museum.



Lieutenant Bruce Bairnsfather in winter clothing - St Yvon, 1915.



The Officer on the right is Lieutenant Arthur Jowitt who was killed in action on 25th April 1915 and is commemorated on the wall of the Menin Gate in Ypres.

These photographs have been reproduced by kind permission of the Fusilier Museum Warwick and are part of the Sladen Collection.

These photos were taken by Brigadier General Sladen in France and Belgium between 1915-1916 whilst an Adjutant with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment



Two soldiers of 1/8th RWR in a trench dugout similar to the one featured in Bairnsfather's famous cartoon "Where did that one go to?" - St Yvon, 1915.



An unnamed Officer wearing a Brodie steel helmet. These were first introduced in Aug/Sept 1915 but weren't fully distributed to troops until 1916. This Officer is holding a Webley & Scott MK1 No 1 10 inch barrel flare pistol complete with shoulder stock. Flare guns were used to communicate between trenches, to artillery and to allied aircraft, also as distress calls for help and illuminating "no mans land" at night. Also known as a Signal gun or Very pistol.