The Fusilier Museum

WARWICK

E-Newsletter - June 2025

MUSEUM NEWS

SORRY, WE'VE BEEN A BIT BUSY! – MUSEUM SUCCESSES



We offer our apologies for the delay in producing what is our first edition in 2025. We do have a good excuse, however. Staff and volunteers have been very busy with lots of interesting projects both on the collections and in learning activities and outreach projects. Together these have helped to improve the care and management of the collections and bring more soldiers' stories to a wider range of public users.

2025 began with a series of training sessions offered by textile conservator Victoria Allan on the cleaning and storage of regimental textiles. This was a project funded by Museum Development Midlands. As the project is coming to its end in early June, we can see positive outcomes of what has been achieved. Five volunteers now have the skill sets to clean, mount or roll, fragile embroideries so that they can be stored and displayed. The fragile Victorian embroideries have been mounted on padded boards so they can be easily handled and displayed to their best. Large flags that had previously folded in boxes, are now bettered stored on large rollers which will better ensure their long-term survival. The display of two treated flags in the current Victory 80 exhibition already shows the public value of this project (see below).



Our first temporary exhibition of 2025 was on food in the army. This included a range of actual food items from the Boer War and World War One as well as more recent rations from 1960s onwards to present day. The display demonstrated the changing attitude to food rationing over the last 300 years with greater consideration to both dietary and cultural needs. The exhibition also looked at the ceremony surrounding the dinning in the officers' mess halls and how such events reaffirmed the regiment's identity and traditions while allowing junior officers to let off a little steam. A nice consequence was that the exhibition drew out a lot of recollections from visiting veterans on both their experiences of rationing and the odd eventful mess hall dinner!

Generous support from the Henry VIII Endowed Trust, Warwick, The Misses Barrie Charitable Trust, Warwick Town Community Grant, Warwick Court Leet, AF Blakemore's Foundation and the Regimental Association means that the museum has now has a new temporary exhibition gallery. The new exhibition area includes wall cases and a costume case, wall panelling with mounted TV screen and spot lighting all designed to accommodate a changing programme of exhibitions through the year. The first exhibition in this new space is the 'Victory 80' exhibition which includes, costume, flags and paintings, all displayed to museum standards.



In addition to all of this, we have introduced a new style of events programme as well as undertaken several community projects and outreach events. We hope the six-month gap in the delivery of a new museum newsletter can be excused with things the team have achieved to make the collections accessible and relevant to a wider audience. We promise not to wait so long to publish the next edition!

–Chris Kirby, General Manager

www.fusiliermuseumwarwick.com

CURRENT PROJECTS

The museum manages 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.



Textile Conservation Project

The Museum Development Midlands (MDM) funded conservation project on the museum's textile collection is very near the end. Following the many weeks of time-consuming work on creating padded mounts for the Victorian embroidery, attention has turned more to the rolling of large flags onto cut sections of plastic drainpipe. The process greatly improves the storage and long-term care of these fragile giants and ensures that when they are wanted for display, they will be without the crease lines that folding them up would cause.

With the expertise of textile conservator Victoria Allan and the hard work of our volunteers Gill, Janice, Janet, Anne and Graham, this has been an extremely successful project, converting fragile and unsightly folded textiles into items that can now be easily used for display and research. The final stage of the project is ensuring the safe and methodical storage of the newly cleaned and rewrapped or mounted textiles in the new textile store. The very last part of the project budget has been used to purchase special storage boxes for the Victorian embroideries.



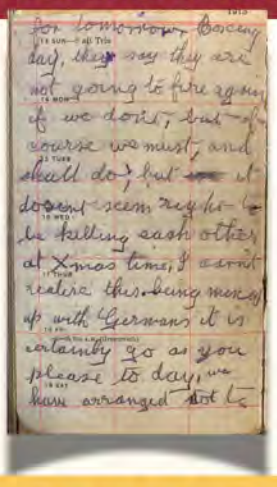
NEW TEMPORARY EXHIBITION SPACE!

A move around of the museum costume store to a more appropriate space on the second floor, opened the possibilities of using the original room as a dedicated temporary exhibition space. The dream of this became a reality when several local Trusts and Foundation (listed above) agreed to support the project. The museum was lucky that Far Post Design Ltd, who had designed and built the original museum, agreed to do the design and installation. Mike Cashman and his team did the install in a little over two days creating wall display cases with a flexible shelving system and pull-out drawers, a freestanding costume case, wall panelling and a mounted TV screen. The final spotlight track was installed by electrical contractor, Dodd's.

This fantastic new addition to the museum creates a display space which is flexible for the presentation of lots of different types of historical material. The ambition is to present three temporary exhibitions each year which draw on themes and collections linked to commemorations, community partnerships and a variety of audience interests.

Documents Transcription Project

Two of the museum's dedicate volunteers have started a new project which will hopefully open a rich pool of resources for exhibitions, research and learning projects. Will and Lesley have begun to transcribe unpublished handwritten diaries and typed reports including the vivid WW1 diary entries of Private William Tapp who describes the famous Christmas Truce of 1914. Although the work is slow and meticulous, the transcriptions will have long term benefit to staff and public users by opening valuable primary sources of historical information that can be used in many ways.



If you can donate funds to help the Fusilier Museum Warwick. please donate and make a difference - https://bit.ly/42gfULs

OBJECT OF THE MONTH

Japanese Good Luck Flag, 1986.8.11

Eesha Kaur, a Work Experience placement from Myton School writes about one of the flags displayed in the current temporary exhibition - 'Victory 80 – The Royal Warwickshire & the End of WW2'. The flag was acquired by Lieutenant General Sir Geoff Evans who had a significant role in the war against Japan during WW2 (please see the website for details). This flag is covered in different writing wishing to its owner 'long lasting fortune in war', 'congratulations on your deployment' and 'wishing you healthy victory'.







The Yosegaki Hinomaru is a traditional Japanese good luck flag, best known for its use during World War II. While it resembles the standard Japanese flag a white field with a red circle representing the sun, the flag has handwritten names and messages inscribed by loved ones.

Family members, friends, classmates, or coworkers would sign the flag, often arranging their words in radiating lines around the central sun, showing their encouragement and support for the soldier carrying it. Soldiers would place the flags folded into their pocket or under the vets of their uniform, over their heart.

These flags carried deep cultural and spiritual meaning for Japanese servicemen. More than just symbols of patriotism, they served to be more personal; believed to offer protection and emotional comfort in battle. Common inscriptions included phrases like "eternal good fortune in war" or "Seven lives for my country," along with prayers for safety, victory wishes, and sometimes religious blessings or family crests.

The Yosegaki Hinomaru became especially widespread during the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II. Many were recovered from fallen Japanese soldiers in the Pacific Theatre, where American troops often took them as war souvenirs. As a result, countless flags ended up in private collections, storage trunks, and museums across the U.S. and other Allied nations.

Now, they are typically displayed with historical context, emphasising the deeply personal and cultural significance these flags held for Japanese soldiers. Museums, use them to educate the public about the war, the lives of those who fought in it, and the cultural practices surrounding military service in Japan.

VISITOR NEWS

FUSILIER MUSEUM WARWICK AND VE DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION







To mark the significant 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, the museum undertook a number of activities: a community project with Westgate Primary School, a new temporary exhibition 'Victory 80 – the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the end of the Second World War' which covered both VE Day and VJ Day, a public stall at a special VE80 event day hosted by the Lord Leycester Hospital, and a special talks event day on VE Day and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment at Warwick Courthouse, led by Henry Montgomery, grandson of Field Marshal Montgomery.

We worked with Year 5 of Westgate Primary to explore the importance of Bernard Law Montgomery in WW2 and the German surrender as well as his recognition by the town of Warwick and Leamington at the end of the war. Imagining that Monty was coming to Warwick for VE80, the students produced a range of fantastic artwork which formed part of the museum exhibition and gave a presentation on Montgomery to the rest of Westgate school on Wednesday 5th June.

Unbeknown to them, after the Year 5 presentation, we arranged for Monty impersonator, Alan Oliver and his entourage of a colonel and a military policeman to turn up at the assembly. The children enjoyed meeting these living history performers. A series of photographs of the class with Monty were done by local photographer Owen Thompson, made possible by funding from museum supporter, Gill Fletcher.

VE DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY *Continued*





General manager and curator Chris Kirby and volunteer Graham Roberts prepare the exhibition.
Picture by Marcus Mingins 2025002MMR

MARKING THE END: THE FINAL days of the Second World War are explored in a new exhibition at The Fusilier Museum Warwick to mark VE Day.

Victory 80: The Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the End of World War Two, running until July 22, commemorates the 80th anniversary highlighting the role of Royal Warwickshire Regiment in the last crucial stages of the war, and focusing on key figures and the roles they played.

On display are rare objects linked to the surrender of Germany, including pieces of tile from Hitler's cloakroom in the Chancellory in Berlin.

The exhibition at the Pageant House museum in Jury Street also reveals the true story of how the regiment acquired a live antelope, its iconic mascot Bobby, from a Hamburg Zoo.

Visit fusiliermuseumwarwick.com for further details.

On VE Day itself, we were joined on the stall at the Lord Leycester Hospital by members of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment Reenactors Group. Other stalls were run by members of the Warwick Military Heritage Network.

On Saturday 10th May, we had a turn out of about 40 for a series of talks related to VE Day and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Henry Montgomery provided a fascinating insight into his grandfather, Field Marshal Montgomery including personal recollections of him as a wonderful grandfather.

In his characteristically animated style, former Imperial War Museum curator, Peter Hart, provided personal testimonies of the tank and artillery operators who were so decisive in the latter stages of WW2. After lunch, regimental historian, Tony Rich, provided a broad, but detailed, overview of the role of the Royal Warwicks in WW2 up until the liberation of Normandy.

This was complemented by a talk by Friends Secretary Jon Davy presenting impressive graphics to illustrate the final journey of the 2nd Battalion through Belgium and the Netherlands to Bremen in Northwest Germany. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day with all proceeds going to support the museum.



CREATIVE CORNER

Creative writing linked to the Regiment.

Our thanks to members of a local creative writing group who has responded to the 80th anniversary of VE Day by creating a series of poems and prose.

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Thank God the war is over,
I feel a sense of relief.
The turmoil that's been cascading within my body,
Can now start to relax with that belief.

I can welcome my boy home now,
A welcome into his mother's arms.
I see him now in my mind's eye,
And smile in response to all his charms.

I should be cheering and dancing with the joyous crowds,
And I do feel joy but I'm shadowed with a heavy cloud.
A cloud that represents my younger boy.
Only 20 and his life was lost,
Victory in Europe has come with such a sad and heavy cost.

My heart bleeds when I try and imagine his last few hours on the fields of Dunkirk,
Why was he sent there?
Why did he have to suffer?
He was too young to witness such horrors at work.

They fell to liberate our country they say,
But we mothers have to pay.
For we no longer are able to caress our boys.
And for country and crown we have lost part of our heart,
And that war continues to destroy.

Please continue your dancing and rejoicing,
I want you all to be happy, safe and free,
But please remember the sacrifices that our boys have made for thee.

Belinda Lever

CREATIVE CORNER

Creative writing linked to the Regiment.

CELEBRATING THE END OF THE WAR



I was just 8 months old when the war finished in May 1945, but I can imagine it must have been so wonderful. We see pictures on the TV of people celebrating in the streets and dancing.

I think our parents generation suffered a lot, and they seem not to want to talk about what happened. My father lost his father during the war, and his brother died in a tragic way. Many people who celebrated the end of the war have now passed on, and just a few old age pensioners remain, who fought in the Second World War.

When each memorial service comes round in November, the old soldiers talk about what had happened with tears in their eyes. It seems like that never leaves you, the horror of war, but hopefully, for those who celebrated the end of war, perhaps those memories begin to cancel out the awful ones

We do need peace. Peace in our hearts. Peace in our actions. And kindness. Kindness to ourselves and others.

Lets hope that the leaders of our countries in the world begin to realise that peace is needed now. And resolutions for finding ways of calm talks which bring about peace will be forthcoming. I pray this from the bottom of my heart.



Margaret Moore

CREATIVE CORNER





WHAT A DAY

The excitement had been growing day by day and, suddenly, there we were - VE Day, victory in Europe, Tuesday 8th May 1945. That evening, the marketplace was crammed, young and old, civvies and lots of men and women in uniform, some even climbing up the tall lamp posts while the beer flowed more than generously. Six years almost, of restrictions, bombers overhead, food shortages and the sad, sad loss of some loved ones who would never return. Gone.

We remember the British and Commonwealth forces, were being pushed back across North Africa until, as it came across on the BBC news, a stand was made at El Alamein, thus far and no more, under the command of General Montgomery, 'Monty', which became one of the most critical turning points of the war. The tide was turning and soon the United States joined in following the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour.

To a young boy now getting older and taking increasing note of what was going on, the thing to have was a wall map of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea so that the progress of the advance by the 'Desert Rats', now westwards towards Libya, coupled with the surrender of thousands of German and Italian soldiers, could be marked out. Finally, the enemy armies in North Africa were no more. Next would come Sicily, then Italy and the heavy fighting which was to take place there and, of course, in 1944, D Day.

So it is with this background that the relief and feeling of joy on VE Day could be fully appreciated by everyone, young and old, all affected in some way by the past five and a half years although, of course, those still fighting or prisoners of war in the far east, were not forgotten.

In the following days, street parties were organised and despite food shortages, there were lots to share on the trestle tables which set up in the road, fancy dress arranged for the children, and even a bonfire (the council came and repaired the damage to the surface a few days later). The realities of the stringent post war circumstances were still to come, but the sense of relief and thoughts of a better future, plus the returning servicemen and women to their families, remained long after that final victory in Europe.

Bryan Reid

2025 EXHIBITION & EVENTS PROGAMME

Here is a brief overview of the temporary exhibition programme and events for 2025. These will be supported by themed family activities during the holiday periods. Remember to save the dates in your diary!

Victory 80 – The Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the End of World War Two

6th May – 20th August 2025 (new dates)

As part of the international commemoration to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2 in Europe and later the surrender of Japan, this exhibition will explore the activities of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in 1945 including the individual stories of some of its soldiers. Using a wide range of objects, photos and documents, the regiment's role in war will be assessed as well as the legacy it created.



Talk: Gallipoli 110: The Warwicks at Gallipoli

Ian Binnie tells the story of the 9th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment at Gallipoli during WW1.

16th July, 7 - 8pm,
Fusilier Museum
Warwick



Talk: VJ80 - Forgotten Generals & Soldiers of the Far East Campaigns

To commemorate VJ Day, Alan Jeffreys and Ian Binnie explore remarkable stories connected to officers and men in the lesser-known military campaigns in the Far East during WW2.

16th August, 1:30 - 3:30pm, Fusilier Museum Warwick

2025 EXHIBITION & EVENTS PROGAMME

Continued

Football & War – How 'the beautiful game' played out in the lives of the Regiment

27th August – 3rd December 2025 (new dates)

This exhibition will explore the different roles football has played in soldiers' lives: the stories of the professional footballers who joined the regiment, the place football played both on the frontline and in the training of reserve soldiers, football competitions and trophies won and the stories around football on the Homefront including its role in the rehabilitation of injured soldiers returned from combat zones and in the rise of the women ammunition factory worker teams.



Football & War Talks Programme:

Football & the First World War

Douglas Smith MBE explores the stories of footballers from local teams who became soldiers in WW1.

13th September, 2pm,
Fusilier Museum Warwick



WW1 Football Stories – Football in Gallipoli & the Rise of Women's Football Teams in WW1

Clive Harris and Steve Bolton explore remarkable hidden stories linked to Football and WW1

11th October, 1:30pm - 3:30pm, Fusilier Museum Warwick

How Football Fouled the Christmas Truce of 1914

Taff Gillingham tells the true story behind football in the trenches of WW1 during Christmas 1914

29th November, 2pm, Fusilier Museum Warwick