The Fusilier Museum
WARWICK

E-Newsletter - October 2024

MUSEUM NEWS

350 Years Since the Founding of the Regiment

6th of Foot
Royal Warwickshire
THE FUSILIERS
350 Years

As commemorations go, this is a big one!





Tradition states that in October 1674 the original soldiers that were to become the Warwickshire Infantry regiment, were formally assembled to support William, Prince of Orange in the Third Dutch Wars. In 1685, these soldiers were recalled to England by King James II and because of their order of landing on the English shore (a little after the Northumberland Fusiliers who became known as the 'Fifth of Foot'), they became known as the 'Sixth of Foot'. By 1782, the regiment was affiliated to the county of Warwickshire and in 1832 was given royal approval to become the Royal (First) Warwickshire Regiment. 1881 saw the reorganisation of the County regiments including volunteer groups to create the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, a name that spanned two World Wars.

However, in 1963, with the agreement of Colonel-in-Chief, Field Marshal Montgomery, the regiment became part of the Fusilier 'Family' of regiments – the Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers, a short-lived title that end in 1968 with a new organisation that encompassed the four English Fusilier regiments – the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

This anniversary is special, and to mark the occasion, the museum, in conjunction with the Regimental Association, has created a programme of events throughout October. The 1st October saw the launch of a new temporary exhibition – 'Dressed to Serve'. Difficult as it is to do justice to 350 years in a temporary display space, the exhibition has been an opportunity to draw on the museum's rich costume collection to present the evolving design of the regiment's body wear over the last 250 years. In the preparations for the exhibition, the museum was delighted to receive a donation of a modern Fusilier uniform (with boots) that had been worn in Afghanistan. This helped us to bring the story in the exhibition up to the present day. More details on the exhibition appear below.

A wonderful talk on one of the regiment's notable characters – Captain Bruce Bairnsfather by a recognised authority Mark Warby took place on 5th October and a special Age UK 'Silver Sunday' event celebrating older people, the next day. Further events including a special church service, and a drama production are planned this month, and we will report on these in the next issue.



The world has changed dramatically in the last 350 years, but the need for people to step up in disputes on the global stage appears as relevant now as it did when William of Orange asked for support all those years ago. As 'Dressed to Serve' shows through its different uniforms, that although the nature of soldiering in bodywear and equipment has changed dramatically, the qualities that make a good soldier remain – resoluteness, selflessness, courage and discipline.

–Chris Kirby, General Manager

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.

Museum Gains Full Accreditation Status!

For the public, it is difficult to convey how important it is for our organisation to receive recognition as a fully Accredited Museum. Accreditation is the industry standard by which museums are measured to ensure that they are applying the best practice they can in the care of collections, the promotion of and access to those collections, and a sound business operation of the museum as a public institution with appropriate management of staff and volunteers.

When the museum closed at St. John's House and moved to a new location at Pageant House in the centre of Warwick, the accreditation status of the museum moved to provisional because of the significant changes that had happened to the museum. Over the last year and a half, the museum has become properly established at its new location making this a good time for a new inspection by Arts Council England to ensure appropriate Accreditation standards are in place.

The process of Accreditation required us to update many policies and plans, so they reflected the museum in its new circumstances at Pageant House. In addition to providing detailed documentation, the museum was also visited by an Accreditation Officer who spent five hours on site. Based upon our application and this visit by an inspector, a recommendation was then made to the Accreditation panel at Arts Council England.

I am delighted to say, that that we have now been notified that the museum has been approved for full Accreditation!

What does this mean in real terms?

Firstly, it is a quality mark to say that we are an institution that can be trusted to safeguard historic collections and manage them for public benefit.

Secondly, it opens possibilities for funding not available to non-accredited museums – including the current textile project grant we have just applied for.

Thirdly and finally, it means our staff are a recognised part of a museum community with opportunities for free training and advice to support the work we do. The museum's Accreditation status will be reviewed again in five years' time

ACCREDITED MUSEUM



CURRENT PROJECTS

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New Laptop Acquired

Readers will remember an appeal in the last newsletter for funds to purchase a new laptop. We are very pleased to report that because of a generous financial contribution by an individual, it has been possible for the museum to buy a new laptop to help in its wide range of daily tasks.

We are extremely grateful for this gift which will prove invaluable in the many projects and activities being planned at the museum.



New Children's Dressing Up Costume

well done!

One of our talented volunteers, Gill has made a child size replica of a 1744 uniform for young visitors to the museum to wear.

She has done a brilliant job in recreating the style and colours of the original uniform!

Gill tells us that she managed to create the costume from 'bits and pieces' she had around the house.

Other members of our Leamington Arts Society volunteers are planning to make more replica uniforms suitable for children, and we look forward to seeing what they come up with!



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

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Textile Conservation Project

Following on from the article in the June newsletter, the grant application to the Midlands Museum Development Small Grant fund has been submitted.

In the proposal, we have asked for materials to provide a better storage facility for the 50 plus regimental textiles, but also for professional conservation repairs to be done.

Another key part of the project is the training of volunteers in how to clean, pack, and store textiles so the collection can be effectively care for, for many generations to come. We will hear shortly if we are successful in getting the grant, so wish us luck!

One of our museum volunteers, Janet, has also started to do some original research on the regimental embroideries and describes her work in the 'Object of the Month' section below.







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Objects of the Month: Treasures from the Fusilier Museum Warwick Embroidery Collection By museum volunteer Janet Ainley

While supporting the recent 'By a Thread' exhibition I have become interested in several of the items on display, and in the larger collection in store. I have been unable to find any research or writing which might shed light on the origins of many of the pieces, so I am embarking on my own research.

A group of embroideries in the Warwick collection which particularly interest me use a technique known as 'woolwork', which was very popular in the 19th century. As the name suggests, these pieces are worked in wool on a canvas backing. They are varied and lively decorative pieces as the four examples below show.



Examples of woolwork from the museum collection

There are around a dozen similar pieces in the museum collection, some of which are framed. The designs vary in some details, but all contain the crossed colours of the regiment, the cap badge or 'Bobby' emblem, flowers (always roses and sometimes also thistles and shamrocks), drums and often a bugle. Some also include a display of international flags pictured with various levels of accuracy. All have scrolls referring to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, meaning that they must date from or after 1881, and most include V.R. for Queen Victoria, suggesting they were made in a narrow interval 1881-1901.

I have begun contacting other regimental museums and seen a few similar examples in person or online. However, the number of examples in Warwick does suggest that this kind of embroidery was particularly popular in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.



Example from the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment



Example from the Northumberland Fusiliers



Example from the Manchester Regiment



Example from the Royal Sussex Regiment

There are clues that point to at least some of these pieces having been made by soldiers in India, but I still have a lot of research to do, and I would be grateful for any further information or suggestions. Please contact me via the General Manager at general.manager@fusiliermuseumwarwick.com.

VISITOR NEWS

COMMEMORATING THE 350TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

There are or have been a series of events and projects linked to the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the founding of the Warwickshire Regiment. Here are some details of those that have already happened this month or are ongoing.

‘Dressed to Serve’ Exhibition 1st October – 20th November

On the 1st October, a new temporary exhibition opened commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Warwickshire Regiment. Ten military uniforms are displayed spanning the period 1790s to 2010s. These show the changing image of the Warwickshire soldier over time and in some cases are uniforms whom belonged to exceptional members of the regiment. One example is Lieutenant Colonel Elkington who after being court martialled for ‘cowardice’ in WW1 - allegedly offering surrender to the enemy outside the French village of St. Quentin - went on to be awarded for bravery in the French Foreign Legion and was subsequently reinstated into the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The exhibition also includes the WW1 uniform of Captain CT Tomes with right sleeve partly removed from where the surgeon had to access his injured arm during the Second Battle of Ypres. This was the same battle that saw the death of the first British commissioned officer of mixed heritage in World War One - Lieutenant Euan Lucie-Smith.

The exhibition also includes a range of military belt and hat plates showing the changing names and insignia of the regiment from the 1780s through until the present day. These include an 18th century example owned by the Duke of Gloucester when he was Colonel of the Warwickshire Regiment. Particularly poignant are the homemade collar badges created by Regimental Sergeant Major Turner out of chocolate and cigarette package foil while he was a prisoner of war during WW2.

The final section of the exhibition includes items from the archive collection getting a snapshot of the regiment’s operations in different parts of the world. These includes a fantastic image of soldiers of the regiment with Sikh troops in the city of Peshawar in 1910. Perhaps one of the most powerful testimonies to the courage and sacrifice of soldiers of the regiment lies in the simple folder entitled ‘The Barn Incident’ which contains both hand-written and typed eyewitness accounts of the 1940 massacre by SS Adolf Hitler Regiment in a barn at Wormhoudt.











VISITOR NEWS

350TH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE FOUNDING OF THE WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Creation of a 350th Anniversary Embroidery



One consequence of the spring exhibition 'By A Thread - Embroidery & Needlework in Wartime' was that the museum made contact with several leading embroidery or stich groups in the region. Conversations with Anne Thumpson from the Solihull Creative Textile Group led to the creation of a project with her group to create a new embroidery piece commemorating the 350th anniversary of the regiment. The image shows Anne and Deborah looking at the layout for the embroidery. The project fits in nicely with the historical tradition of commemorative regimental embroideries going back to the Victorian period. The finished piece will be displayed in the museum when it is finished sometime near the end of the year.

Bruce Bairnsfather Talk, 5th October





As part of the 350th commemoration, it was fitting to pay tribute to one of the regiment's most colourful characters, Bruce Bairnsfather. Mark Warby, an acknowledged expert on the famous WW1 illustrator, gave a fascinating talk looking at Bruce's life particularly in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Mark noted that the soldier in one of Bairnsfather's famous cartoons 'The Eternal Question' (see image) wears the cap badge of a Royal Warwick. Sadly, Bairnsfather's lack of business acumen was his undoing as he saw little of the profits from the mass merchandising of his images by the Bystander magazine. His most famous character, 'Old Bill' was featured in plays and films including one starring a young John Mills. A revival of interest in 'Old Bill' in World War Two extended Bruce's career, but he was eventually to die relatively poor in 1959. The striking relevance of Bairnsfather's cartoons was demonstrated by Mark when he showed how Bruce's original cartoon "Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, Go to it" was replicated in a modern cartoon showing Theresa May and her cabinet in a bomb crater.

The History Party at the Museum – Age UK Silver Sunday Event, 6th October





On 6th October there was a national 'Silver Sunday' celebration of older people organised by Age UK. The museum was delighted to be involved in this running its own 'History Party' as a free drop-in session for both older people and military veterans. The Friends of the Museum sponsored the event with tea and cake and a collection of nostalgic objects from the 1940s and 1950s were put out for guests to handle. David Seeney from the Museum Friends was also on hand to offer help with family histories. It was a very pleasant occasion with both families and veterans attending. We would like to express our gratitude to museum volunteers Anne and Barclay for coming to support the event.

REGIMENTAL STORIES

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









350 YEARS
of courage and service

by Col. John Rice, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, Retired







6th Foot, later The Royal Warwickshire Regiment traces its roots back to 1764 to a time when most military activity was conducted on a private army basis. Wealthy individuals would raise, train and equip a body of men, usually called a regiment, and offer them to anybody willing to pay for their services. In the early 1680s, the Government started to bring all these private armies on to their books and so in 1684, Vane's Regiment became the 6th Regiment of Foot.

Since that time, The Regiment has fought all over the world from Afghanistan and India via Sudan, Spain, Gibraltar, France and South Africa to the North American continent. The Regiment fought with distinction in both World Wars and subsequently in Palestine, Cyprus and Korea. More recent conflicts are Borneo, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

During the Regiment's history uniforms have developed from the flamboyant versions of the early days, no doubt designed to show the wealth of the Colonel of the Regiment (and perhaps to impress the ladies) to the more earthy browns of the early 1900s after lessons learned in the Boer War where red jackets were an easy target for longer range marksmen. Brown serge formed the basis of uniform during both World Wars and for some time afterwards until the 1960s when a plain green combat clothing was developed and brown serge battledress was discontinued.

In due course, plain green was replaced by Disrupted Pattern Material (DPM) of darker greens and blacks to match the then major likely area of operations, namely Europe. In 2011-12, in view of recent operations in desert conditions (Gulf Wars 1 and 2 in Kuwait and Iraq) and Afghanistan, DPM was replaced by a lighter coloured version called Multi Terrain Pattern material which is in use in the present day. Ceremonial uniforms for such occasions as royal coronations or funerals are held centrally and issued as required.

REGIMENTAL STORIES

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



Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery





Lieutenant Euan-Lucie Smith

350 YEARS

Soldiers' weapons have also changed over time from the frankly quite dangerous matchlock then flintlock muskets to the Lee Enfield magazine fed .303" rifle which was introduced in1895. This served the infantry well until 1957 when, in line with greater cooperation within NATO, the 7.62mm semi-automatic rifle replaced it, using common NATO ammunition. This had a working range of up to 600 metres, considered necessary for operations against the Soviet Army in Europe and remained in use for some 30 years until it was replaced by the lighter and smaller calibre (5.56mm) SA80 in 1987. This is now due to be replaced but no public information is available as to its successor.

Organisationally, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment retained its position as a county infantry regiment until the late 1950s. By this time, the size and shape of the British Army and in particular the large infantry component was under review to engineer a reduction in costs. The strategy of the Large Regiment was introduced. This resulted in infantry regiments gathered into groups of four based on territorial or other considerations. In order not to lose the many histories and traditions which are the "glue" which forms regimental culture, morale and tradition, officers and senior non-commissioned officers were cross posted between the four regiments so that in time, all came to know and understand each others' traditions. Thus, when the time came for the large regiment to lose one of its battalions, their history and traditions continued with the others in the regiment.

Thus, in 1963, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment became the Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers at the start of their journey to join The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (5th Foot), Royal Fusiliers (7th Foot) and Lancashire Fusiliers (20th Foot). On 23rd April 1968 (St George's Day), these formed The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers with the Warwicks becoming 2nd Battalion of The Regiment.

Then, in 2014, as a result of further shrinkage of the infantry, 2nd Battalion was removed from the Order of Battle. They were fully recruited and battle hardened as a result of their tour in Cyprus as Theatre Reserve for Afghanistan. Their removal made no sense but was the result of political input not unconnected with Scotland's independence referendum. Members of the Battalion were redeployed to 1st Fusiliers, to the Parachute Regiment and to Special Forces. Some chose to accept redundancy. Although The Regiment lives on within our First Battalion, it was the end of Warwickshire's own visible county infantry regiment.

MUSEUM EVENTS FOR 2024

HERE ARE FORTHCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS FOR 2024. MAKE SURE TO GET THEM INTO YOUR CALENDAR!

NOTE: THE MUSEUM MOVES TO ITS WINTER SCHEDULE OPENING FROM 10AM TILL 4PM AFTER OCTOBER HALF TERM.

Exhibition: Dressed To Serve – 350 Years of the Warwickshire Infantry Regiment

1st October – 20th November 2024

Presenting ten uniforms spanning the last 250 years, this exhibition provides a series of snapshots of the places, people and events that have made up the rich history of the county's oldest regiment. Entry to the exhibition is included in the museum admission.





'The Ballad of Arthur Vickers'

18th October

An invitation event only for parents and members of the Vickers family.

A drama collaboration between the Midlands Actors Theatre, Westgate Primary School and the Fusilier Museum Warwick. A drama production with music, performed by Year 5 of Westgate Primary School presenting the life and achievements of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment's first Victoria Cross winner, Arthur Vickers. A film will be produced of the performance for public viewing.



'350 Years of Living History' – A Family Event

26th October

Children go free!

To mark the beginning of the school holidays, there will be a special family event day at the museum. We will be joined by various members of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment Living History group dressed in different historical uniforms with authentic equipment and weapons. The museum will also has new child-size uniforms from different periods for young visitors to try on. In addition, there will be craft activities and the museum's Christmas Tree decoration competition with the chance to win prizes. Family activities will be also available throughout the half term week.

SEE MORE

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Friends of the Museum Talk: 'Two Continents & Four Wars – 6th Foot in America & Europe 1775-1815'

26th October, 2pm – 3pm

Tickets are £6 – available in the museum or on Eventbrite

Ian Binnie explores this fascinating historic chapter of the regiment in a dramatic period of change that has helped shape the modern world we live in today.



Remembrance Sunday Special Opening

10th November 12:30pm – 4pm

In recognition of Remembrance Sunday, the museum will be open for free after the competition of the wreath-laying ceremony at the Warwick War Memorial. There will be an opportunity to view the exhibition 'Dressed to Serve' before it closes on 20th November.

Friends of the Museum Talk: 'Remembrance After the Great War'

30th November, 2pm – 3pm

Tickets are £6 – available in the museum or on Eventbrite

Andrew Hamilton explores how after World War One the process of remembrance developed into the plethora of military memorials, we recognise today.



St. Mary's Church Warwick Christmas Tree Festival

28th November – 8th December

The Fusilier Museum Warwick will be displaying a decorated tree as part of this popular annual event at St. Mary's Church. This is the perfect occasion to get into the Christmas spirit!

350 Years of Living History

Saturday October 26th 10am – 4pm



A Family Event Day at the museum

- Living History Soldiers
- Dressing up
- Craft activities
- Xmas decoration competition





Kids go free!



The Fusilier Museum WARWICK