

The Newsletter of the Patrons,  
Society of Friends and Volunteers  
of Rifles, Berkshire and Wiltshire  
Museum



July 2023  
Volume 5 Issue 2

# Redcoats Review

## Celebrating the 138th Anniversary of the Battle of Tofrek and the 211th Anniversary of the Battle of Salamanca

Dear Readers

This Newsletter is the first that the editorial team have produced after the AGM. The object is to have articles that will be of interest to members of the Society of Friends, the museum Volunteers, the Patrons and the staff of the Museum. With that in mind the Newsletter has widened the scope of its coverage. We will continue to have articles covering military history pertinent to the Regiments we are the home for (those whose badges appear on the right of this page). Additionally by having articles from the volunteers we hope to everyone a greater insight to the running of the museum. That said the site of the Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust has several other strings to its bow and we hope to produce articles that will keep you the readers up to speed with what is evolving at The Wardrobe.

What we would ask in turn, because it is your Newsletter, is your feedback. For example over the years the layout of the Newsletter has altered. Does the layout meet with you approval or would you prefer a different one. Do you feel that this new issue is too long or not long enough. An observation, if I may. If the general feeling is that it isn't long enough than the editorial team would ask for articles from you the readership. As we cannot be expected to produce every article, especially as we do not necessarily have the depth of experience to cover the full gambit the Newsletter now wishes to produce.

Just one final plea. Please pass the Newsletter once you have read it to any of you acquaintances who are one of our select readership. Your never know we might gain new members



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### FUTURE EVENTS

To be announced later

# THE 2023 NORMANDY BATTLEFIELD TOUR

NORMANDY TO THE RIVER SEINE - 17-21 APRIL 2023

WRITTEN BY MARTIN MCINTYRE

On the back of the successful First World War battlefield tour that took place several years ago it was suggested that a similar tour be arranged, this time covering the landing on Juno Beach, Normandy (5th Royal Berkshires) 1944, and the actions of the 4th and 5th Wiltshires with the 43rd Wessex Division through Normandy to the River Seine. The baton was duly picked up and a reconnaissance was carried out with our previous guide Andy Steele and the itinerary published. Sufficient numbers expressed a wish to do this trip and arrangements were made. Then came COVID and the worldwide pandemic and everything as we know was locked down. Several years passed and we managed to survive the situation. Some of those on the previous list asked, 'Are we still on for a trip', and of course the answer was yes. To ensure all was well a second reconnaissance was conducted (To ensure the pesky French had not removed the roads!), and with only a few dropping out the trip was up and running. Similar arrangements were made with the group being allowed to park their cars on the Square at Brock Barracks, Reading (Don't tell ex RSM John Venus !!) courtesy of RSM Jamie Dyer of 7 RIFLES.

The trip was full on and very busy with visits to :

DIEPPE (Berkshire and Wiltshire Commandos)

RIVER SEINE (The assault crossing by the 5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment– Battle Honour.

Action at La Chapelle Saint Ouen (5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment).

Visit to Giverny (Mayoral Visit) (4th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment).

St Desir CWGC Cemetery visit (the fallen of the 5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment from the River Seine action).

Action at LA VARNINIERS CROSSROAD (Battle Honour)/ St Jean Le Blanc/Mount PINÇON (Battle Honour)/ HILL 112 (Battle Honour)/MALTOT (Battle Honour) - All 4th and 5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment.

PEGASUS BRIDGE (Rifles Battle Honour)

NORMANDY—JUNO BEACH (Battle Honour) - 5th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment (Hackney Gurkhas)

BAYEUX CWGC Cemetery visit

OMAHA BEACH (American action)

As a result of the reconnaissance carried out it was established that after the River Seine action the 4th Battalion rested for two weeks in Giverny (The home of the French painter Claude Monet) and whilst there a member of the battalion made a wooden representation of the Regimental cap badge that was later presented to the Mayor by way of thanks for looking after them. This item has since been displayed for many years on the mayor's office wall. The group visited to the view the badge and a

further presentation was made on behalf of the Regiment by Colonel M Cornwell. Contact was also made with the householder of the premises on the Seine riverbank where the survivors of 'A' Company 5th Wilts fought until they run out of ammunition and were captured. The house owner kindly allowed the the tour group to visit his house. In addition the group met up with Emmanuel May, a Gendarmerie Warrant Officer, who had previously visited the museum in Salisbury and spoke with Colonel Cornwell when researching his grandfather, who was a Wiltshire Regiment soldier in the First World War. After the great War his grandfather remained in France marrying a local girl. During the Second World War his grandfather fought with the French Resistance. Emmanuel spent the day with us when we visited Hill 112, Maltot and Mount Pinçon.

A Number of photographs by our trip photographer 'Anthony Armstrong' Chris Bacon. The images below give a flavour of the trip with images taken during the war to show the 'Then' and 'Now'

### The 4th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment at Giverny, France.



*Members of the 4th Battalion Carrier Platoon in Giverny , 1944. Front Centre is private Cooper who made the wooden representation of the Wiltshire regimental Badge. Later presented to the people of the town*



*The Wooden badge made by Private Cooper , now framed and displayed in the Mayor of Giverny's office*



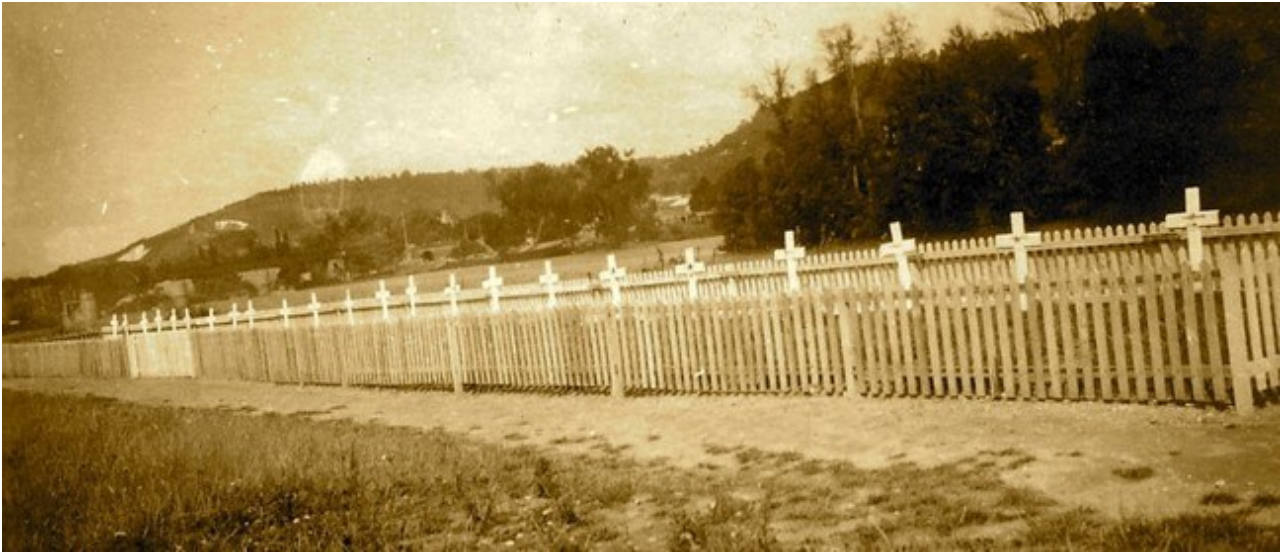


*Colonel Michael Cornwell presenting a plaque to M. Claude Landais, Mayor of Giverny, to be placed alongside the original badge made by Private Cooper in memory of the 'moonrakers' who were hosted by the village in 1944*

## **The 5th Battalion crossing the River Seine**



*Members of 'A' Company embarks under the cover of smoke. The lead platoon, under Lieutenant Selby (8 Platoon) were the lead boats, then hit a sandbank, the smoke lifted and 28 of the 32 members of the platoon were killed. The bank shown in this image is very similar today and highlights the problem they encountered in getting the boats in the river. Those killed were later buried on the river bank*



*The original resting place of mainly 8 Platoon 'A' Company on the banks of the River Seine. These soldiers were later reinterred at St Desir CWGC Cemetery*



*Several CWGC headstones in St Desir Cemetery where all of 8 Platoon and the Royal Engineers who fell with them are now buried, having been removed from the River Seine bank*





*This is an example of 'Then and Now'. The image on the left shows soldiers of the Wiltshire Regiment and we believe a Royal Engineer sat on the roadside in Vernon. On the recce Martin and Andy found the exact spot. The road in question ran parallel to the River Seine and opposite a small road leading to the river. The image on the right shows the exact same damaged iron gates and the gate pillar is identical. Having satisfied themselves that this is the same location we now know that this is the area the soldiers paused before either embarking on the assault boats, or they were part of the covering group.*



*The survivors of the crossing made their way up to a house on the far bank and there were involved in defensive action. They ran out of ammunition, were not reinforced and as a result were captured and spent the rest of the war as POWs. Based on photographic and map evidence contact was made with M. Alain Cauderlier, the present owner and seated left in the above image, who welcomed the group into his home and provided a glass of Champagne for everyone. As a local historian he was able to confirm and collaborate some of Mac interesting facts.*



*The memorial at La Chapell Saint Ouen is dedicated to the soldiers of the 5th Battalion who fell gaining the village's liberty. This action took place after the crossing of the River Seine. The battalion (less 'A' Company, who had all but been wiped out crossing the river) carried out a classic 'advance to contact', were engaged by the Germans, killing those listed on the memorial. The Village was quickly captured taking 160 prisoners. The memorial was placed here by the grateful villagers. On our visit Lieutenant Colonel Norman Minty laid a wreath in memory of our soldiers*



*The Tour group looking back from the memorial over the largely unaltered ground that the 5th Battalion advanced. From Left to Right Andy Steele , our tour guide, Mac McIntyre, his right hand man, Michael Cornwell, Audrey, Franklin Richmond, Vera Richmond and Norman Minty. Taking the photograph is Chris Bacon*



**5th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment (The Hackney Gurkhas)  
At Normandy 6th June 1944**



*Members of the 5th Battalion guard prisoners of war shortly after the landing on Juno Beach on 6th June 1944. The pill box has been identified and is still in situ. The pill box bears a plaque placed there by survivors of D Day commemorating the service of the Battalion on those operations. The image below shows Colonel Cornwell placing a wreath to commemorate the action and those who failed to come home, with Mac carefully watching to ensure it is done correctly*





## MULTI TALENTED MULTI ROLED AND LONG SERVING VOLUNTEER

In December 1994 a young lady was doing an internship at the Redcoats in The Wardrobe Museum, when Major John Peters MBE was the Assistant Regimental Secretary and Museum Curator. One evening she went home and mentioned to her mother that the Museum were seeking volunteers to work in the Museum in a variety of roles and persuaded her mother to see what was involved. The mother concerned was Anita Taylor who has been with the Museum ever since, that makes her the longest serving volunteer, a period of 28 years.

Anita records her first task was transferring artefact accessions, which were then handwritten in the Museum Accession Registers and that we still have and consult occasionally, on to a computer database.

When Major John Peters retired as the Museum Curator, he became a volunteer himself and for two days a week Anita and John worked up in Attic 2, sorting out the uniforms. Money for old Rope for a former Quartermaster, but interesting for Anita.

Having finished the uniforms Anita then helped with the accessioning of the paintings, pictures and embroideries. Once that task had been completed, Anita and John moved down to the then Archive room, into today's parlance 'the volunteers' room'.

Here they would answer enquiries from the public requesting information from family relatives on soldiers' activities during World War One. Again this was an aspect of volunteering that Anita found extremely interesting.

Whilst working of the enquiries the Museum, by this time under David Chilton's leadership, had embarked on transcribing the War Diaries of every Battalion from WW1 and WW2. Before going into print every sentence and page has to be proofread to ensure there are no errors. Possibly due to Anita's skill as a highly trained shorthand typist. She was entrusted with the important task of proof-reading.

As many of you may know the Museum closes after the last weekday in November each year and usually opens on the first weekday in February. But for the volunteers there is still important work to be done. Every display cabinet has to be checked to confirm that the display notices for each cabinet accurately describe the items on display. One would be surprised how often an item may have been removed for a temporary display and may not have been returned but the information panel is still providing information on an object that has been moved. Additionally each cabinet will be cleaned whilst this internal audit is going on.

Towards the end of 2019 Anita and John carried out a check on the Reserve Collection of uniforms stored in Attic 4, for those of you unfamiliar with the location of Attic 4 it is above the Library, the kitchen, and the volunteers 'room. Access is by a wooden ladder. Due consideration had been given to both Anita and John and the Uniforms were brought down from Attic 4 by Alistair. The aim of this exercise was to go through the Modes Database and make a list of items with 'no known location' or 'missing' being recorded.

Then Covid 19 and lockdown struck. However once volunteers were allowed back into the museum, we needed to find Anita a worthwhile task, as by now John Peters had ceased his volunteer work. Initially, we again used her Pitman Shorthand skills, with Bethany asking Anita to check Modes for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

Covid 19 has seen us lose the service of our NADFAS team and when we were allowed back into the museum as volunteers, Bethany, our curator wanted the medal project completed. So once again Anita has been released from the claustrophobic confines of Attic 2 and has joined Michael Cornwell in the Library every Monday, where together they have embarked on relocating the medals in the medal drawers. Essentially providing a neater layout out and at the same time providing a more conservation aware environment. Anita's attention to detail is keeping Michael Cornwell on his toes and although they are about a third of the way through this project, it will probably take them another six to nine months to complete and it will be a case of 'What next' or our longest serving volunteer



*A hastily taken snap of Anita on her last task of supervising the editor whilst we tackle the medal project. At this point Anita is laying the medals, for which we have just cut out the template for their new location in the plastazote, on the library table, so that when the complete template the medals, about 50 in number, will be placed in the tray*

## WILTSHIRE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION CENTENARIANS

Earlier in the year Captain (Retired) In Knight, who retains a Birthday card list of the Old Wiltshire Regiment Comrades was experiencing problems with the accuracy of the Association records. Not through any fault of his, I should hasten to add, but by members not passing on their changes of address or circumstances. Mark you the age group that was causing Ian' concern was those who had passed the 100 years old milestone. So utilising the experience of David Chilton and Chris Bacon in the field of genealogy and family history research Ian was able to fairly accurately update his records.

In the process of this work Chris bacon recounts one individual story .

### **Ron at 101**

Although the numbers of survivors of WW2 are steadily dwindling, a recent survey has revealed that there are at least three centenarians from the Wiltshire Regiment alive. These are Ivor Gardner (103), 6032005 Lawrence James Morgan (101) and 1420639 Ronald (Ron) Clavell who will be celebrating his 101st birthday this month.

Ron attested for the General Service Corps in 1943 and did his initial training in Bodmin. He joined the Wiltshire Regiment and was posted to 5th Battalion. He was a Bren gunner and marksman. Ron arrived in France on D+13 ( 19 June 1944) after a bumpy sea passage. He still remembers that sea passage and subsequent off shore holding delay of about 5 days due to bad weather. During this period his diet was unvarying, 'Bully Beef' day after day.





The Battalion had its baptism of fire on D+23 (29 June 1944) clearing woods south of Arromanches between MOUE and BARON. About this time Ron suffered both a knee injury and had succumbed to Scarlet Fever. He was flown back to RAF Lyneham. After 6 months in hospital in Worcester he spent the remainder of the war on Home duties guarding POWs.

Ron married Margaret Andrews in Wilton on 15 January 1944, when she was 18 years old. The couple had one son, Anthony.

Ron's operational service was very short but to his enduring regret his buddy Arthur Davage (Southampton) did not survive the war. Arthur was killed by shell fire on 1 July 1944 as the battalion was defending the high ground forward of the village of BARON in preparation for the attack on Hill 112. He was one of 17 ORs killed that day. He lies in Bayeux CWGC Cemetery.



*The area of high ground near the village of Baron, where Ron's close friend Arthur Davage was killed by shell fire*

Ron, the Chairman and Members of the Society of Friends send their warmest congratulations and best wishes. Enjoy your BIG Day!

TWO RARE EVENTS INVOLVING THE RIFLES WARDROBE MUSEUM TRUST,  
THE MUSEUM AND THE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION, THE FOURTH STAND  
OF COLOURS OF THE 62<sup>ND</sup> (WILTSHIRE) REGIMENT OF FOOT AND SALIS-  
BURY CATHEDRAL

Those of you familiar with the North Wall of the Nave of Salisbury Cathedral; may recall seeing past stands of Colours of several regiments but mainly those of the Wiltshire Regiment and its antecedent regiment, the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot. For those who may not be familiar with the interior of Salisbury Cathedral the photograph below shows the location of Colours relating to this particular article, they are the stand of Colours with virtually no material remaining.



*On the extreme left of the image are the 4th Stand of Colours of the 62nd (Wiltshire ) Regiment of Foot which have officially designated “Disintegrated”; after a joint meeting with the MoD Secretary of Honours and Distinctions, Salisbury Cathedral , and regimental representatives*

In the present day Army a Stand of Colours usually have a life span of active service of 25 years. Pre 1880 (the Cardwell and Childers Reforms) a stand of Colours had a longer length of service. Once a Stand of Colours have ceased to be on active service it is the military custom that they are “Laid Up”, usually in a building with a close connection to the regiment; often in the past that would be a church or cathedral.

Many of us firmly believed, that once the Colours had been laid up, they remained in situ until they had turned to dust, just as the officers and soldiers who served under those Colours had done.

The Covid 19 pandemic gave many an institution with time on its hands to examine their property, goods and chattels and conduct audits. Salisbury Cathedral did just that and concluded that the Fourth Stand of Colours of the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment fitted the term 'Disintegrated' and therefore wished to have this stand of Colours removed and handed back to the Regiment.

The Cathedral approached the Rifles and RGBW Regimental Association, and as the Chairman of the Association I have to admit being initially flummoxed. I had no idea that Colours could be deemed to be "Disintegrated" and like many others thought Colours remained Laid Up until nothing was left on the pike and that the bare pike remained in post.

With the advice and help from Major Andrew Greenwood, Secretary to The Army Honours and Distinctions Committee it was agreed that there would be an on site meeting between the Cathedral, Major Greenwood Major Nigel Walker ,Chairman of the Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust (RWMT) and the Regimental Association represented by their Chairman and the Association Chaplain , The Ven Alan Jeans MBE. This took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

Several incorrect misconceptions were cleared away by Major Greenwood:

- a. When Colours are "Laid Up" the building in which they are laid up becomes the custodians of those Colours not the Regiment.
- b. If the custodian of the Colours subsequently believes the condition of the Colours is such that they present a less than desirable image to the public, or that the poor condition they are so poor that they could be an environmental problem; they may ask that the Colours are deemed "Disintegrated".
- c. Once deemed "Disintegrated" what are left of the Colours are to be returned to the Regiment of its successor regiment, who will be faced with choosing one of three options for the eventual disposal of the Colours.

We were all trying to rationalise why the 4<sup>th</sup> Stand of 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire ) Regiment Colours were so more decayed than the later Colours of the Wiltshire Regiment, which were laid up alongside on the Nave's north wall.

Well to start with the Colours in question first entered service being presented in 1805 whilst the 62<sup>nd</sup> were stationed in Ireland, subsequently carried in the campaigns in Egypt, Sicily and Italy between 1806 and 1813, and later in action in America in 1814. In 1842 the Regiment was going by boat on the River Ganges from Calcutta to Dinapore. The Colours were in the commanding officer's boat (Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Reed) when a storm blew up, the boat capsized and the Colours were lost. They were recovered from the river, badly damaged, seven months later, by a party from the Regiment .So being submerged for seven months certainly did not help their longevity. They had also been in service for some 37 years around the world and



would have been carried in any action, as well as innumerable parades.

We also learnt from Major Andrew Greenwood that Horse Guards/ the War Office did not assume central control of the issuing of Colours until 1880. Prior to 1880 the Colours, whilst follow a laid down pattern may be made in whichever theatre the regiment was serving at the time of issue. 1880 saw the introduction of the present day finials of the sovereign's four arm crown surmounted by an imperia lion wearing a crown. Prior to 1880 the finial would a spear head shape.

Having agreed the Colours in question were "Disintegrated" the Regiment was faced with three alternative methods of disposal. Those being:

- a. Option 1 was for the Pikes and Colours to be buried in an unmarked grave in consecrated ground. This option could not be carried out within the confines of Salisbury Cathedral and there wasn't any suitable consecrated ground close by within Wiltshire that the Regiment wished to have as the final resting place for these Colours.
- b. Option 2 was for the finials to be removed from the pikes, for the pikes and the remnants of the Colours to be cremated and the ashes of the remains to be scattered on consecrated ground. This option was not one favoured by the Regiment.
- c. Option 3 was to remove the finials, cremated the pikes and remnants of the Colours and inter the ashes in a suitable approved locations. Within the Wardrobe premises there is memorial garden which is quartered so that there is an element for the Royal Berkshire Regiment, The Wiltshire Regiment, The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire) and for The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment.

It was Option 3 that we found suited the Regimental aspirations and it was on that basis that after the Evensong Service on 7 March 2023 the Colours of the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot were removed from the North Wall of Salisbury Cathedral's Nave, handed back to the Regiment, and for the final time marched back to the Regiment's home to be cremated.



*Canon Kenneth Padley, the Canon Treasure, removing the Regimental Colour, Major (Retired) Nigel Walker preparing to take the Pike whilst Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) David Chilton prepares to bag the disintegrated Colour.*



*Representative of Salisbury Cathedral clergy, the Regimental Chaplain and Regimental Association members with Lt Col (Retd) D G Chilton and Major (Retd) S E Bowkett as the Standard Bearers. Below the 'Last March Home'.*





Having taken custody of the Colours we now had to plan for their interment. As an Association we were already planning a major service in Salisbury Cathedral on 17 May 2023 to dedicate the Book of Remembrance of the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment (RGBW) and The Rifles. It just seemed appropriate to round off the day with a very short service to inter the cremated ashes of the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment within the Memorial Garden of the Wardrobe.

To make this rare service even more remarkable we were able to have the fifth and sixth generation relation of Serjeant William Cooper, who had served under these Colours in the 1840's, inter the ashes. Those being Lt Col (Retd) Norman Minty and his son John Minty. Norman being the fifth generation to have served in the Regiment and John the sixth. The family having served in either the 62<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of Foot, The Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire) Regiment, The Wiltshire (Duke of Edinburgh's) Regiment or The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire). Another fitting finale was that Last Post and Reveille for the Ashes were play by Fran Cowley, a week before his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. Fran having been a trumpeter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion the Wiltshire Regiment.



*Fran Cowley, a 96 yr old 2 Bn Wiltshire Regimental Band veteran playing the last Post and then Reveille when the Cremated Remains of the 4th Stand of Colours of the 62nd (Wiltshire) Regiment were interred. The interment was carried out by Lt Col (Retd) Norman Minty and his son John Minty , the fifth and sixth generations of the family to have served in the county regiment. The fist family member being Sjt William Cooper who actually served under these*



To be able give the Colours of the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment a fitting and finale resting place, the Regiment owes a great deal of thanks to the Museum. To the volunteers to helped on all those behind the scenes jobs that go unnoticed, but without which the event would not be a success. To Jill Sherman for having made the shrouds into which the Colours could be safely housed as they were removed from the Nave of Salisbury Cathedral. To Bill Sherman for the procurement of the incinerator and to Alistair Rigg who safely dealt with the cremation of the Pike and Colours. To Nigel Walker for the master carpentry skills in making the casket for the ashes. To Chris Gale for his inspired remedy of how to lower the casket into the ground. To Fran Cowley who, though I could see was quite emotional, played the Last Post and Reveille so well. To Ven Alan Jeans MBE for researching the service for the interment. Lastly to all the Wiltshire Regiment Old comrades who came to say Adieu to the Fourth Stand of Colours of the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot.

I doubt very much if any of us will ever witness such an event in our lifetime. It took 175 years from the laying up the 62<sup>nd</sup> (Wiltshire) Regiment's Colours to reach this point.

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## “THE VLY CLUB”

### 4TH BN, WILTSHIRE REGIMENT

In 1968 a meeting was held at the ‘Jenny Wren’ pub in Calne, Wiltshire to discuss the possibility of forming a club to keep alive the spirit and interest of ex members of the battalion. It was intended that it would include the old and new members of the battalion from pre Second World War up to 1967 when the battalion was disbanded. The aim was to have an annual 4th Battalion reunion. This continued with varying degrees of success with the members financing a club standard in 1976. In the early days the club members included many known characters of the battalion from the 2nd World War, but the years have taken their toll. The custodian of the club records was the stalwart Jeff Mathews who has over the years kept the name going almost single-handedly with several visits to Holland and Lochem in particular. The club maintained their own records which have now been deposited at the Regimental Museum for safety and future research. The image shows Jeff Mathews in Lochem when we believe he handed over the standard to the local liberation museum in Lochem, Holland who he has been liaising with over many years.



*Mr Jeff Matthews, seated in his wheelchair handing over the 'Vly' Club Banner to Berry Schwarthoff, owner of the Liberation Lochem Museum. Berry Schwarthoff and his wife Yvonne regularly attend the anniversary commemoration of the September/October 1944 fighting of the 4th and 5th Bn Wiltshire Regiment held at Schutygraaf*

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## THE WARDROBE'S ARMOURY

### IAN PERRY

Having an armoury in a museum is a bit niche – I don't imagine there are many civilian museums that have much to do with firearms and edged weapons! The Wardrobe however has nearly 100 firearms, plus almost 200 edged weapons and hundreds of other items from Ammunition (spent, dummy and drill rounds) to Zulu clubs. It's logical therefore to have a dedicated volunteer to look after the armoury, and this is an attempt to explain a little of what I do.

There are two main parts to the armourer's role: firstly the administrative side and supporting the Curator and Trust Manager in keeping the museum 'legal', and secondly maintaining the condition of the armoury items. Behind everything is the imperative to reflect “best practice” in what we do – there is always more to learn and always room to improve what we do and how we do it.

The administration first: Quite rightly, the legislation surrounding firearms (particularly automatic weapons and handguns) is very restrictive – we are required by law to be able to show that we keep everything secure and document the firearms that we hold. The addition of some specific fields in Modes (thank you, Robert!) allows us to identify the relevant items quickly and efficiently, and we can provide the Home Office on demand with the required evidence of what we hold and in what condition. Further additions to Modes have allowed us to record the certification of ammunition items as “free from explosives” - and even keep track of the small number of replica firearms items that we have (for demonstration purposes).

Looking after the condition of armoury items: The majority of our firearms have been modified to prevent them from being fired, and there is no intention that any of them will ever fire again. Some of them have significant battlefield damage, too, and this is a vital part of their history and the story that they can tell. The maintenance requirements are therefore less exacting than for a Service armoury, but it is still vital to protect the firearms from further deterioration. The armourer's role is therefore to do as little as possible (!) - because anything that requires dismantling a firearm will cause wear and tear – while doing what is necessary to make sure they remain clear of rust, rot or any other form of contamination.

Clearly the majority of firearms items are not out on continuous display (they would rather dominate the museum otherwise!), and having safe, secure and well-ordered storage is an important part of the process. We have a new, unique and bespoke racking and shelving system, that holds all the firearms and swords that are not on display and protects them from accidental damage. Smaller items are easier to manage, and are stored in various locations around the museum.

(A few words on handling of the museum's firearms. With care, some of them can be handled by the public, and in certain cases used very occasionally for demonstration purposes, including handling drill or dummy ammunition. This always gets a great response from visitors – there is no substitute, particularly for younger visitors, to getting to hold the real thing! The golden rules are that handling is permissible only when it can be supervised closely, and we never 'dry-fire' due to the risk of damaging the weapon's action.)

Finally, a very brief few words about my background. After gaining my degree in mechanical engineering and materials science, I served in the Royal Engineers (briefly!) and had a 30-year career in the Ministry of Defence. In the MoD, I worked in several areas of weapons and armour development, and latterly was embedded as an analyst and scientific advisor in different Army headquarters, including serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. So, working in the armoury is pretty much the perfect role for me! I was researching members of my girlfriend's family who served in the Wiltshires during the Great War, and came to the Wardrobe for some advice – and never left.





*Ian Perry, with one of his proteges in hand.*

And in case you're wondering – yes, I do have a favourite in the armoury. The Enfield P14 rifle, designed after the Boer War to address perceived shortcomings in the iconic Short, Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE) and its associated .303 ammunition. Obviously, with war looming, the Government decided not to replace the SMLE at that point and it remained in service until the 1950' s. The P14, however, was manufactured in America and shipped over to the UK to be used as a sniper rifle in the Great War, and issued to reserve and Home Guard units in the Second World War before being withdrawn in the late 1940' s .

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### GOLF TROPHIES PRESENTED BY OFFICERS WHO SERVED MORE THAN 100 YEARS AGO

The following article was the brain child of Andy Fontana, one of the Rifle Wardrobe and Museum Trustees, and John Marsh a committee member of the Society of Friends, who between them both are the moving force in the Farmer's Boys Golf Society. The major point of their article is that three officers who served in the era of the Boer War provided trophies that are still competed for over 100 years later and their trophies provide an example of what we mean by the term 'golden thread.'

## The Gamble Cup



*Presented by Lieutenant General R N Gamble, his cup is now presented to the golfer who comes scores the second lowest nett in the medal competition . Andy Fontana present ing the cup to the 2023 winner Bob Luckwell*

The trophy title is inscribed “The Royal Berkshire Regiment Golf Society Annual Challenge Cup – 18 Holes Medal Handicap” and was presented by Lt General RN Gamble CB, DSO. The trophy was “re branded” circa 1960 and The Duke of Edinburgh’s Royal Regiment added to the title and Lt Col EAT Boggis was recorded as the winner in 1960.

So who was Lieutenant General R N Gamble CB DSO?



### Early Service

Commissioned into the Lincolnshire Regiment on 13th August 1879.

He served in the Bechuanaland Expedition 1884 - 85, the British military expedition to the Tswana country, to assert British sovereignty in the face of encroachments from Germany and the Transvaal, and to suppress the Boer states of Stellaland and Goshen.

Promoted to Captain on 3rd August 1887, and served as adjutant, passing through Staff College in 1890. He then served as ADC to the GOC Scottish District (January 1894 - September 1895) .

He was made Deputy Assistant Adjutant General Cork District in October 1895, then relinquished this role on appointment to the Egyptian Army early in 1896.

In 1898 he fought in the Battle of Athara, in the Sudan, on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1898, a preliminary battle to Kitchener's final advance on Khartoum and the Battle of Omdurman in the September 1898.

Presumably he was serving as a British Officer with the Egyptian army and fought at Omdurman, together with Captain (later Field Marshall Douglas Haig and a young Winston Churchill. 1<sup>st</sup> Lincolns were also part of the campaign having deployed from Malta.

He was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the 4th Class of the Medjidie. This Order was issued in considerable numbers by Sultan Abdülmeceid as a reward for distinguished service by members of British forces during the Crimean War against Russia, and to British recipients for later service in Egypt and/or the Sudan.

He remained in Egypt until February 1900 when he went to South Africa to take up the role of Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (during the Boer War). Here he was part of operations in Orange and River Colony, including the action of Hon nek, and operations in the Transvaal during May and June 1900 including action near Johannesburg and Diamond Hill. During further operations in Orange River Colony, including the action of Wittebergan, he was Mentioned in Dispatches.

He was awarded a Distinguished Service Order which was presented by the king 29<sup>th</sup> October 1901.

#### Moving to the Royal Berkshires

He was promoted into The Royal Berkshire Regiment as a Major in November 1900. Posted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion he took command in Meerut, India from 1907 to 1911, when he was promoted to Colonel. He then served as General Services Officer 1st Grade in the 6<sup>th</sup> Poona Division from 1912 to 1914.

On the outbreak of the First World War was sent to Mesopotamia with the Division, who were the first British Indian Army troops to land in Mesopotamia in November 1914. He was promoted to Major General and commanded the 17<sup>th</sup> (Ahmednagar) Brigade of the 6<sup>th</sup> Poona Division during 1915 where he was Mentioned in Despatches three times. His Brigade consisted of:

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry (The Mooltan Regiment).

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 103<sup>rd</sup> Mahratta Light Infantry

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 22<sup>nd</sup> Punjabis

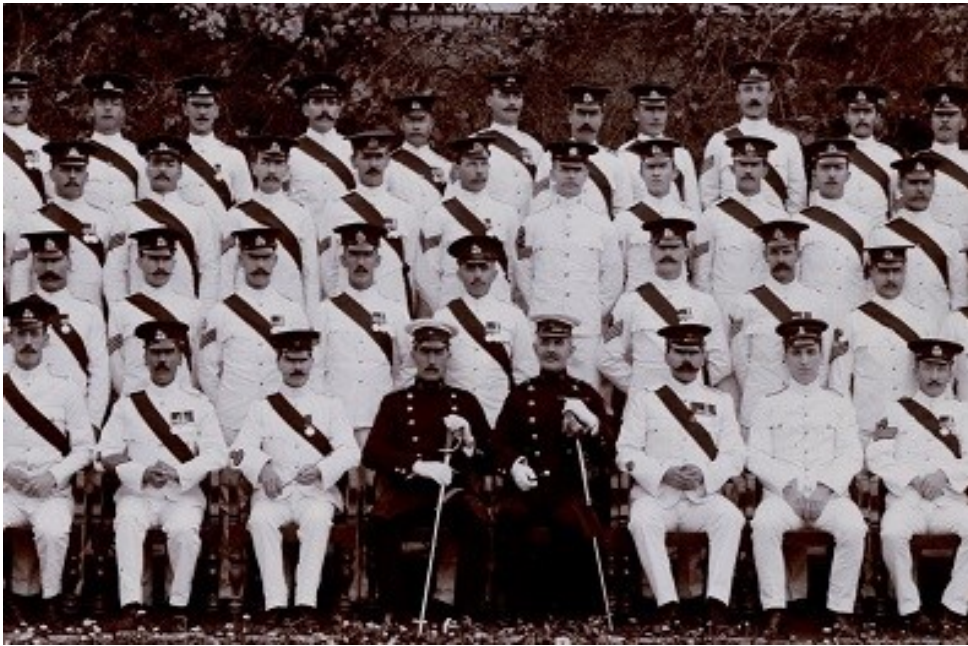
He was created Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in 1915, which is an award second only to a damehood or knighthood.

He was transferred back to India 1916, avoiding the surrender of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division to the Ottomans after they had been besieged in Kut.



During the last part of his service, he was Deputy Adjutant General at Army HQ at Simla and subsequently Inspector of Volunteers in India and Burma.

He retired in 1918 after 39 years of service.



*2nd Bn, Royal Berkshire Regiment - A sepia photo of the Warrant Officers, Staff-Sergeants, and Sergeants of the Battalion in Meerut in 1909*

*Front row L to R CSgt Markham, QMS Twitchin, Bandmaster Barratt, Lt Murphy  
Col Gamble, WO2 Quick, Schmr Holloway, CSgt Godfrey*

## The James Cup



*The James Cup and the 2023 Winner David Gardiner*

The Wiltshire Regimental Golfing Society – Bogey Singles Challenge Cup – Presented by Captain James Douglass James MC in 1935 – Known as The James Cup, won by him in 1935

James Douglass James joined the Wiltshire Regiment from Sandhurst in December 1914. Promoted Lieutenant February 1915 and Captain May 1917. Served with 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion from December 1916 in Salonika and France. Wounded October 1918.

MC Citation: "For most conspicuous gallantry and skilful leadership during operations near Gouy from October 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> 1918. During the attack on October 4<sup>th</sup> he handled his company with great ability and dash under heavy machine gun fire and captured 50 prisoners and several machine guns. During consolidation he showed great energy and foresight and subsequently beat off a strong counter attack. He was eventually wounded when again leading his company forward to an attack."

After WWI he went abroad with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to India and China. Was with the Legation Guard at Peking and Adjutant of the Tientsin Volunteers. He returned to the UK with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in 1930 and served at Plymouth and Aldershot until 1935 when he was appointed Brigade Machine Gun Officer. He was then posted to the Regimental Depot.

He represented the Regiment at hockey, rugby and polo. James died on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1936 from meningitis and was buried at Efford, near Plymouth on 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

James's medals are in the Regimental Museum at Salisbury. The group consists of MC (GV), British War Medal and Victory Medal. According to the Wilts Regt Journal June 1939, James was a collector of medals to the Regiment. His collection was left to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Officers Mess, after his death.

The Farmer's Boys Golfing Society use the James Cup as the prize for the winner of the Stapleford Low Handicap competition



*2nd Bn, Wiltshire Regiment - A sepia group photograph of the officers who were serving in the Battalion in January 1930 in Shanghai, China at the end of this tour. Captain J D James MC is seated far left.*



## The Gillson Bowl and the Gillson Trophy



*The Gillson Bowl going to the golfer with the lowest nett score, i.e their number of shots taken minus their handicap. The 2023 winner was Garry O'Doherty*



*The Gillson Trophy which is awarded to the golfer with the lowest gross score. The 2023 winner was Kevin Flay*



## Lt. Col. Robert Moore Thacker GILLSON D.S.O.



*He was christened on 14 May 1878 in Westend, Hampshire, England; married to Ethel "Minna" KENWORTHY (born 1879 in Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire), daughter of John Kenworthy and Mary Hannah Kenworthy (nee Nield on 22 Sep 1909 in Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales and died 29 Dec 1939, Bideford, Devon, England aged 61*



Our limited knowledge has revealed that he played cricket at Radley College in the years 1895-1896 and then in 1925 he is recorded as having played for the Free Foresters.

He wrote "A Short History of the Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's) (62nd and 99th Foot) from 1756 to 1936" published 1921.

The memorial to him in the Northam Church, Devon reads "- In loving memory of Robert Moore Thacker Gillson D.S.O. Lieut. Colonel The Wiltshire Regiment (Duke Of Edinburgh's) Born 5th April 1878 Served in The South African War 1899-1902 and The Great War 1914-1918, Died 28th Dec. 1939."

The citation for his DSO, as recorded in the London Gazette dated 20 September 1916 reads:

*The 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment were part of 21st Brigade 30th Division in July 1916 and on 1st July carried supplies to forward areas. In action at Montauban, assisting 90th Brigade in holding gains in the village. Heavy casualties sustained during the enemy's bombardment and counter attacks on 2 July, relieved and to Bois des Tailles on 3 July. On 8 July the Battalion assembled in Bernafey Wood and La Briqueterie for the assault on Trones Wood and Maltz Horn Farm. 'A' Company took objective at head of Maltz Horn Valley. Remaining Companies crossing the space between Bernafey Wood and Trones swept through the southern half of the wood and later held off strong counter attacks from its northern end. There would be great acts of bravery and leadership throughout the day. The Commanding Officer Lt Colonel Robert Moore Thacker Gillson having been wounded early in the assault, lay out in the open and refusing to be moved carried on directing his Battalion awarded the DSO (London Gazette 20 September 1916) the citation states -*

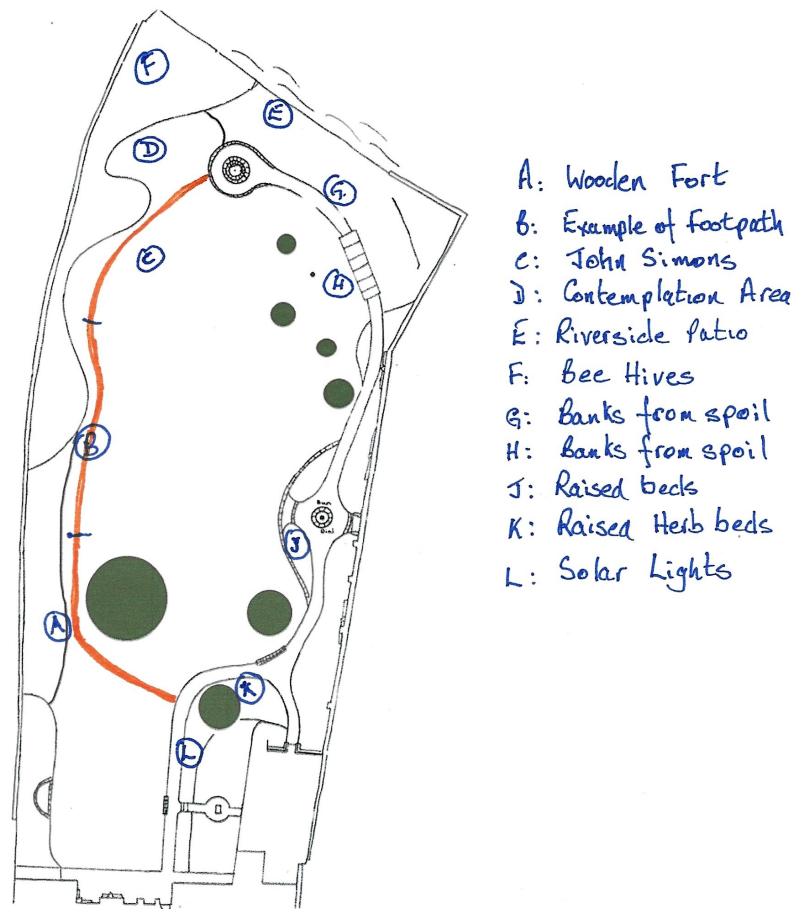
*'For conspicuous gallantry in action. Under very heavy fire he attacked and captured a wood. Though wounded himself he resumed command when he heard that the next senior officer (Captain F R Mumford) had been killed, and remained on duty till loss of blood compelled him to hand over to his Adjutant'.*

In total two DSO's, six MC's, four DCM's and eight MM's were awarded. The War diary records 'During the whole of our stay in Trones Wood the Battalion was bombarded with heavy shells and considerable damage was done. In this action 5 officers and 28 other ranks were killed with 6 officers and 126 other ranks wounded with 14 other ranks missing'. Both Lt Colonel Gillson and Lance Corporal Merritt are mentioned in the War Diary on 11 September 1916 as being awarded the DSO and DCM respectively.

## TRUSTEES REDEVELOPMENT OF THE WARDROBE GARDEN

For those of you who haven't been to the Wardrobe since June 2023, this article is an attempt to bring you up to date with the redevelopment of the Wardrobe Garden.

Our lovely walled garden, set between The Wardrobe and the River Avon, is a calm and tranquil environment where one can literally see and hear the bees going about their daily business, before returning to their hives at the bottom of the garden. Regular viewers of BBC's Country File may recall an episode which covered how some doctors have taken to prescribing outdoor activities, and specifically gardening, as a means of taking exercise and as a tonic for mental health. Our Trustees also wanted to make the garden more user friendly to children and the disabled.



*The plan above shows the layout of the Garden from the back door of the museum looking towards the river. The dark green circles represent the major trees within the bounds of the pathway. The orange line denotes the new shale path enabling wheelchair access around the whole garden*



*A; The Wooden Fort, aimed for the younger visitor to entertain themselves*



*B: Example of the pathway as indicated on the plan*

*C: Plaque indicating the two new white ash trees have been added to commemorate the volunteer service of former Wiltshire Regiment and DERR member of the Corps of Drums, John Simons*



*D: & E: Two areas created for Reflection. 'D' is a quiet shaded area with two of the traditional garden benches. 'E' is the newly created timber patio with two Lutyens' styled wooden chairs generously donated by David Chilton, former curator a Friend and Patron of the Museum*





*F: The six bee hives managed by Alisatir from which he produces the marvellous jars of Wardrobe Honey for sale in the museum's shop*



*G: H: & J: Illustrating banks which were created from the earth removed when making the new pathway. By creating the banks the level of the plants is higher and brings them into closer to the field of visitors especially those in wheelchairs*





*K: Raised Herb Beds, designed to allow visitors to smell the scent given off from the herbs. Again designed to assist those in wheelchairs to gain the same benefit as the abled bodied visitors. Note in the lower image the differing types of mint are in containers that restrict the roots growing sideways, forcing them to put out runners, which hopefully will allow the gardeners to propagate the shoots and create a marketing asset of plant sales through the museum shop*

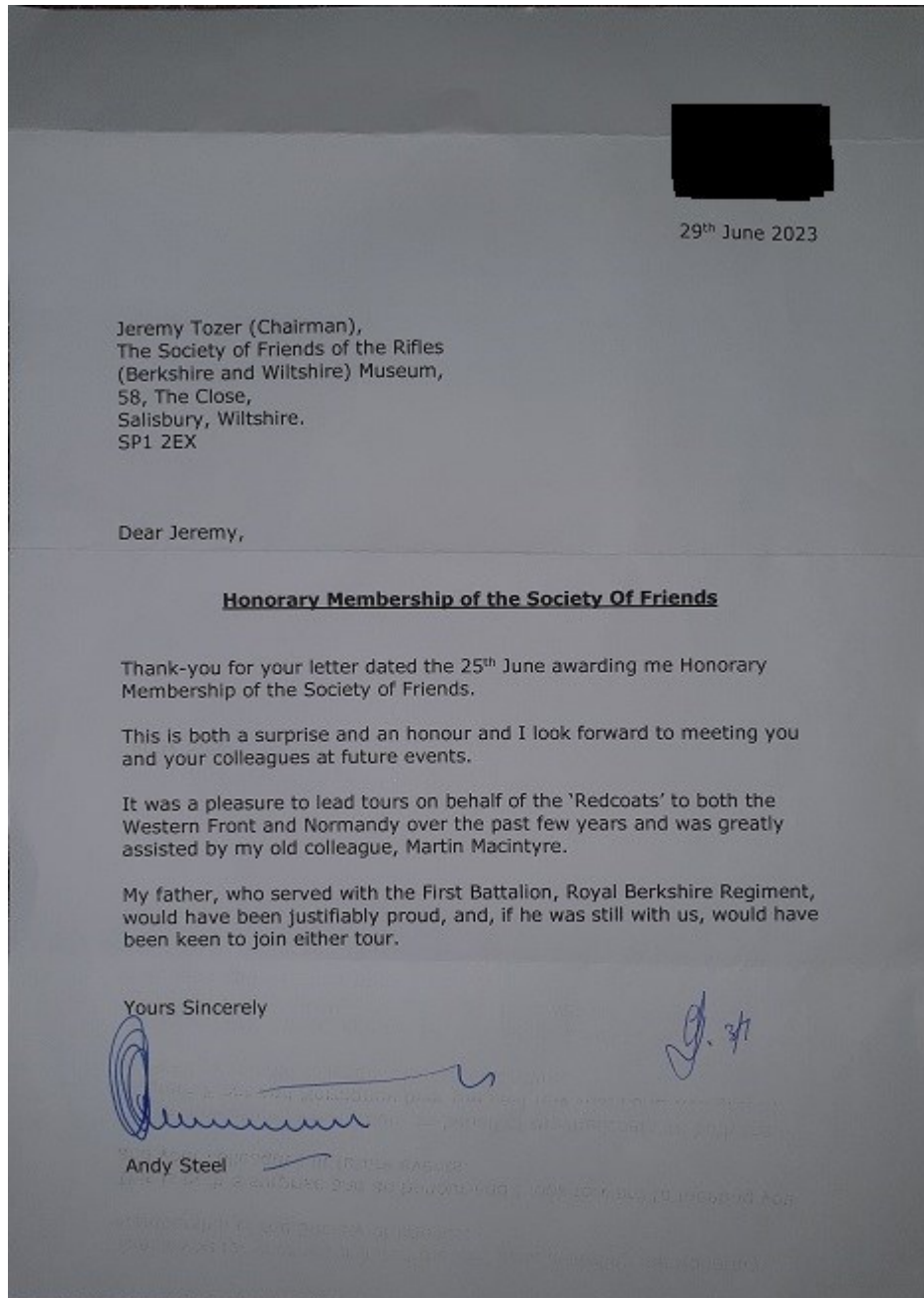


*L: A solar powered LED pathway light, one of several lining the edge of the Memorial Garden pathway from the rear door of the museum to the start of the circular pathway. Alistair reports that during a normal day the power stored is sufficient to run the lights from dusk until 02:00 am*



## NEW HONORARY MEMBER

After the last AGM, when the membership approved the suggestion that Andy Steele, the Battle Field presenter, who has researched , organised and run the last two battlefields undertaken by the Friends of the Museum, should be made an Honorary Member, our Chairman , Jeremy Tozer wrote to Andy Steele and in return received the following reply from Andy. The Chairman felt that the members should see Andy's reply.





## EDITOR'S LAST MINUTE POST

Literally as I have been putting this issue to bed ready for proof reading by Martin McIntyre and Chris Bacon,, Norman Minty apprised me of an item of interest posted by the Royal British Legion.



**LOST TRAILS**

Do you recognise yourself or anyone in the stories below? We can help

**CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE SOLDIERS?**

My father, Edward John Pearce, was in the Royal Berkshire Regiment in the 1950s. He passed away 25 years ago now, but I found these photos from his time serving in Nicosia, Cyprus, and wondered if anyone recognises the men? My father is pictured top left, on the right. I don't know who the others are, but I thought that, although they may be long gone, their families might like the photos. I'm also interested in finding out more about my dad's time in the Army, if anyone is able to help?

**Contact: Mrs Alison Hill (née Pearce) at [house4two@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:house4two@hotmail.co.uk)**

WEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Needless to say I contacted Alison Hill and copied both Mac and Norman in on the reply, suggesting she visited our web site by providing her with the hyperlink to the page of the history of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. Not to be outdone by a 'Rupert', Mac immediately bombarded her with the relevant pages of the 'Last 12 years'. This follows the normal Mac approach, provide a 'sweetener' then strike by asking for copies of the images she has. The problem is , that is his system and it rarely fails rarely fails.

**Editorial Team:**

Michael Cornwell

[Researcher3@thewardrobe.org.uk](mailto:Researcher3@thewardrobe.org.uk)

Martin McIntyre

[Researcher2@thewardrobe.org.uk](mailto:Researcher2@thewardrobe.org.uk)

Chris Bacon

[Archivist@thewardrobe.org.uk](mailto:Archivist@thewardrobe.org.uk)

Your web page on the Museum web site is:

<http://www.thewardrobe.org.uk/museum/contact-us/support-us/friends-events-and-publications>

