



*Friends of The*  
**FUSILIERS MUSEUM**  
 OF  
**NORTHUMBERLAND**

**St George's Day**  
**2024**  
**Issue**

**Images from St George's Day, 2023**



St George's Day 2023  
 Service and Parade, Morpeth

Photographs courtesy of Major Chris Hall, 5 Fusiliers



**350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**This year the Regiment celebrates its 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

In 1968, as part of the Army Reforms, four Fusilier regiments were amalgamated to form today's regiment: The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. The four antecedent regiments were the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers, both raised in 1674, the Royal Fusiliers (City of London) Regiment (1685) and the Lancashire Fusiliers (1688).

The name 'Fusilier' comes from the word 'Fusil' which was the musket that they carried as Foot Soldiers.

Today, all ranks wear the red over white hackle - this distinction was bestowed upon the Northumberland Fusiliers in recognition of their victory at the Battle of St Lucia in 1778. You can find out more about the histories and traditions of each of the antecedent regiments by visiting their websites, and their museums.

The Regiment will mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a St George's Day parade in Ashington on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April.



'Fusil'

**Good to go**

Staff have been hard at work, cleaning and restocking, to ensure that the museum was ready to open in time for the 2024 season.



Visitors are assured of a warm welcome at the Fusiliers Museum – whatever the weather!

We are delighted that Marcia, Peter and Mark have returned to work Front of House, and we welcome Hal to the team.

Your support and donations are important to us, and greatly appreciated  
*Thank you!*

## Mystery object



The object pictured above was donated along with a medal, documents and photographs relating to Lance Corporal Samuel Bowstead who served in the Northumberland Fusiliers during the First World War. He was part of the Transport Section and worked with horses ... but what is it?

As a young lad Samuel earned money as a 'runner' - taking bets to Bookmakers – this was a highly illegal occupation and the consequences were dire, if caught!

Later, Samuel had been legitimately employed on the quayside repairing ships' sails when boats came into the Tyne. When war broke out he enlisted in the Northumberland Fusiliers.

The object above is his sail-maker's thimble. He used the thimble, and the skills he had learned, throughout his army service to repair the horses' leather tack.

Samuel was wounded twice during the war, and in 1917 he was discharged due to his wounds. During his convalescence at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle-upon-Tyne he met a nurse who later became his wife.



**Left:** Northumberland Fusiliers, 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion Transport Section. The soldiers are holding bridles and other horse related equipment, c1915

(Unfortunately, we are not sure which of the subjects in the photograph is Samuel Bowstead)

**Right:** Samuel Bowstead, pictured in later life, working as a Lift Operator at the Town Hall in the Bigg Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Samuel is standing beside his son, who was a member of the Royal Fusiliers

Interested in volunteering at the Fusiliers Museum of Northumberland? Please contact us.

See our website for more details

[www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk)

## Volunteer activity

Volunteers, David and Mark, have continued their winter project to tidy up the medal drawers. They have shortened labels and straightened up the rows to create more space in the drawers, which were becoming full. They, together with Dave, will provide an object handling table for visitors on Thursdays during the open season.

Bill and David continue to carry out research for family history enquiries.

Cataloguing of recent acquisitions keeps Joyce busy.

We welcome Lewis who is making good progress with the museum's collections database, and Elena who is going to facilitate craft sessions for visitors of all ages.

In January our outreach team delivered a talk about the First World War to the Shilbottle History Society and in February, a workshop about the Age of Empire at Dr Thomlinson's Middle School, Rothbury.

The volunteers' next outreach presentation is at Morpeth Library, on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024. Relating to the First World War, it is entitled '**Experiences of the Trenches – Life as a Northumberland Fusilier**'. Tickets cost £3 and can be purchased from Morpeth Library or through Eventbrite via the following link:

[Experiences of the Trenches: Life of a Northumberland Fusilier Tickets, Tue, May 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM | Eventbrite](#)

**Things I enjoyed ...** "All the interactive parts and the games at the end. Also liked learning about the diseases. David and Mark were very good at the session."

Feedback from Iris,  
Thomlinson Middle School

## Thank you, John!

**After almost 20 years in the role, John Armstrong, chairman of the museum trustees, has retired.**

John joined the board of trustees in December 2004. An active trustee, John's thoughts soon turned to updating the displays. He began fundraising and made appeals to supporters, trusts and visitors to build up match-funding.

After two rounds of Heritage Lottery Fund applications the museum received a total award of £311,300 and work began on the re-development which was installed in two phases (2014 and 2017). The museum was transformed into the modern and welcoming space we see today – John's lasting legacy.

John was also instrumental in re-vamping the museum's website, and later in the making of six films for the museum's website during the Covid pandemic.

He was the driving force behind two film productions for the museum, one in 2014 commemorating the First World War and the other to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings.

In 2014 John was delighted to meet Kirsty Walker, a member of Gareth Malone's Military Wives Choir, and took part in filming at the museum when Kirsty visited to view her Great Grandfather, Ernest Sykes', Victoria Cross.

John has always been encouraging and appreciative of everything that trustees, staff and volunteers do for the museum and that appreciation is heartily reciprocated by all! John, we wish you all the very best for your retirement.

John will be succeeded by Neil Salvesen, a trustee since 2017, who has agreed to take on the role.

## Alnwick Castle's World War Two weekend

**Alnwick Castle is hosting a Second World War-themed weekend on the first weekend of May, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> – Monday 6<sup>th</sup>.**

We'll be joined by reenactors Tastes Through Time, and a Tiger Moth fly-past from local business Tiger Flights. On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May we will be welcoming back some of the evacuees who lived at the Castle during the War – most of whom are now in their 90s!

**At the Fusiliers Museum we will have a special Second World War trail for children and activities provided by our volunteers during the course of weekend.**

John also met Kate Adie, journalist and Chief News Correspondent for the BBC, when she presented a talk in Alnwick Castle's Guest Hall



Kirsty Walker (holding the VC), and her mother



John Armstrong and Kate Adie, in Alnwick Castle's Guest Hall prior to the book talk

## Anniversary beacon

**On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June, His Grace the Duke of Northumberland will be lighting a beacon as part of nationwide commemorations for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.**

The beacon will be lit on the Barbican of Alnwick Castle at 9.15pm and will be accompanied by a reading to honour those who served in the D-Day landings.

All are welcome to join and watch as we mark this anniversary.



## From the archive



### Discipline is key

**This innocuous looking key is for the Guard Room at The Depot, Fenham Barracks, Newcastle upon Tyne. It was used to lock up miscreant soldiers in the 1950's.**

Discipline is an important part of army life. It ensures that orders are carried out and instils confidence in teamwork.

Offences such as insubordination or drunkenness could earn a soldier a spell of detention in the Guard Room.

Crimes of a serious nature warranted a Court Martial at a higher level than minor misdemeanours which were dealt with by Court Martial in the barracks. Our archive holds a record of Court Martials held at Fenham Barracks.

The following trials were held in Fenham Barracks during the year 1950.

Two Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (RNF) were charged with "Improperly taking an army vehicle and using it for their own purposes." The two lads entered not guilty pleas, but were found guilty and each were sentenced to 35 days and 56 days detention respectively.

A corporal serving with the Army Catering Corps was found guilty of "improperly taking a woman into his sleeping quarters at Fenham Barracks and permitted her to stay there by night." He also received 56 days detention.

Finally, a sergeant in the RNF, while working as a caterer in the Sergeant's Mess, was charged with "neglecting his duties in regard to stock and cash resulting in him being unable to account for cash and/or stock to the value of £13.9.6." He was reduced to the ranks and put under stoppages of pay until the sum was repaid.

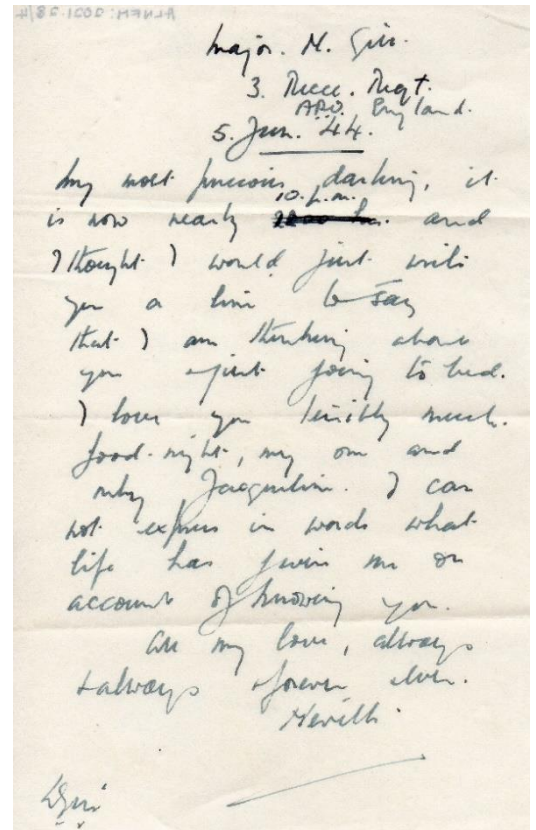
### Officer's declaration of love

**Major Neville Gill of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reconnaissance Regiment, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, wrote to his fiancé, Jacqueline, on the eve of D-Day.**

The letter reads: "It is now nearly 10 pm and I thought I would write you a line to say I am thinking about you just going to bed. I love you terribly much. Good-night my one and only Jacqueline I can not express in words what life has given me on account of knowing you.

*All my love always, & always & forever, & ever. Neville"*

The following day Neville's detachment, which was in charge of Beach Traffic Control, was to land on Sword Beach, Normandy. Concerned that the Marines had dropped them on the wrong beach, Neville separated from the others whom he had sent to take cover. Investigating the situation, and alone on the beach, a German bullet entered his chest and broke his spine. He spent a year in plaster and had a lifetime of pain. Sadly he never married, he died as a consequence of his wound in 1958.



Really nice, well maintained; great for all the family. Fantastically set out, enough interesting artifacts and well informed. Thank you.

Karola Kane, Berkshire  
March, 2024

Visit our website

[www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk)

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