

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE QUEEN'S OWN ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT
MUSEUM TRUST COMMITTEE

REPORT OF MUSEUMS MANAGER

Report prepared by Samantha Harris, Collections Manager

Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment Museum Trust

Annual Report 2014-15

1. **Learning.** Over the last year with the support of Council staff a number of events have been held in Maidstone Museum for the public and particularly school groups.

The Learning Team have run a number of WW1 themed workshops where we have used the gallery to help KS2 children see objects and understand the context of events. It has given visual representation of uniform, weapons and everyday items soldiers used on the frontline.

An Arts Award focusing on WW1 has also been developed, which uses the Frank Hyde painting 'The Soldiers Return to Maidstone East' as inspiration for learning about WW1 through art. This award looks closely at uniform, weapons and trench art. The students used inspiration from QORWK to design medals and empathise, in a small way, with soldiers on the front line.

The Learning Team have regular visits from secondary school classes as part of their History topics and art classes to look more closely at the QORWK museum. They have focused on medals, trench art and uniform design.

Secondary schools tend to look at the gallery as a whole, tracking changes through the history of the regiment, by looking at weapons, uniform and everyday items. Primary schools tend to focus on the WW1 and WW2 cases as this links to their curriculum.

The Museum is also taking part in the Peacefields Project. This is a project for secondary schools- in this instance 5 core schools, who will be visiting to take part in a 2 hour session to find out about the life of a soldiers from 3 families at the start of WW1. (they have also visited 2 other locations as part of the wider project) We have a re-enactment

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group coming to give a drama presentation and this is followed by an interactive/find out session in the QORWK looking at the display and handling a selection of WW1 objects from the learning collection.

The Collections Manager has undertaken a number of talks on the QORWK regiment as a Collections in Focus talk, U3A History groups and as part of the Museums on Prescription initiative, catering for and engaging an older audience.

2. **Publicity.** Media interest in the Regimental Museum continues to remain high, particularly in light of the ongoing WW1 Centenary Commemorations.

A future publicity drive will be undertaken as part of the 2016 'Coming Home exhibition' 24th Sept – 7th Jan (see below for more detail).

The Marketing Team now have a dedicated person working on social media, which has been of benefit across all MBC Museums, with regular posts and stories being created by the Museum Collections, Learning and Interpretation Staff and shared through various media.

3. **Accessions.** During the period 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015, a small number of individual donations have been made to the regimental museum, and added to the central CMS (Collections Management System), Adlib, to make the information and artefacts searchable and accessible. These number 12 items in total, from a number of individuals. This number is lower than previous years as there has been a strict review of acquisitions in line with the Collecting Policy to ensure the quality and non-duplication of items acquired. Please see a small selection of examples below:

Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1694.1
Object Name	Scrap Book
Description	Scrapbook of drills and inspections kept by George Knowles Senior covering the years 1863 – 1866. Hardcover in green and pale gold with the word "Scrap Book" in elaborate writing on the front page. The scrap book pages are brown and fragile.

Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1694.2
Object Name	Document
Description	1874 list of Members Eligible to serve on the Kent Rifle Volunteer Committee from Company A

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	and Company B. Dimensions: Height 30.5 cm, Width 25 cm.
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Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1694.2
Title:	Official Programme of the Grand Volunteer Review
Object Name	Document
Description	Official programme of a Grand Volunteer Review in Windsor Park by the Her Majesty the Queen June 20th, 1868 by Jas. Lindsay, Maj.Gen.

Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1694.5
Title:	Bandsmen of the 1st Kent Rifle Volunteers
Object Name	Photograph
Description	Photograph of Kent Volunteers bandsmen. Twenty two bandsmen with instruments photographed in the open with trees in the background.

Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1694.5
Title:	George Knowles Junior and the Royal West Kent L Company
Object Name	Photograph
Description	Photograph from around 1900, of WKV, or Royal West Kent 'L' Company. The company is lined up in six rows with the first row of boys lying on the ground. Two cyclists are flanking the group. The photograph is taken in the open in a field with large tents in the background. George Knowles Jr marked with an 'x' Dimensions: Height 28.5 cm x Width 33.3 cm

Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1695
Object Category	Medals (Military)
Object Name	Medal
Description	Punjab Frontier medal, 1897-98, awarded to Major C.W.H. Evans 1st battalion of the Royal West Kent Regiment. Obverse: a veiled and crowned bust of Queen Victoria Reverse: An Indian and a British Soldier supporting a flag. The ribbon is red with two green stripes. Diameter 36 mm.

Object Number:	MNERM 2014-1697.1
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Title:	Diary of Captain James Mills
Object Category	Documents
Description	A transcription of this work was donated to the museum a number of years ago, his granddaughter is currently writing a book on Captain Mills.

A further acquisition has been made, with funding requested in the report for last year (2013/14). Purchase was made of the India (1895) Medal to (then) Major CWH EVANS, DSO, completing an existing set on display in the QORWK Museum, at a cost of £750. (Seller Ian Laidler, and highlighted for significance to the collection by regimental researcher Chris Jupp – Accession Number - MNERM2014.1965). The Item is now at the Museum, and will be redisplayed alongside the rest of the set in due course.

4. **Gallery.** The 6 framed and glazed Regimental colours removed during the redisplay of the gallery c.2011 have now been moved back and rehung in the gallery.
4. **Enquiries.** Enquiry numbers have increased hugely with the WW1 Centenary capturing the imagination of the nation and encouraging them to undertake family history research. Enquiries for the period April 2014 to March 2014 number around 450 by telephone face to face, and post, but mostly via email.
5. **Activities.** Planning work is underway on a temporary exhibition to be housed at Maidstone Museum & Bently Art Gallery, commemorating WW1 both on the home front and the QORWK on the Western Front. At the centre of the exhibition will be 2 paintings by Frank Hyde (a local artist), 'Soldiers Returning to Maidstone East Station' from Maidstone Museum's Collections and 'Trones Wood' from QORWK Collection.

The exhibition, called 'Coming Home' will run 24th Sept 2016– 7th Jan, drawing on stories and themes from Maidstone Museum & QORWK Museum collections, as well as potential loan requests from other institutions. It is very timely with the centenary of the Somme in 2016, the battle which included Trones Wood.

7. **Documentation.**
Across all 3 of Maidstone Museums a large scale project is underway to audit the collections (approx. 600,000), to improve documentation and access to the collection, creating more effective collections management. The audit on the QORWK Collection, in line with Best

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Practice, is progressing well, particularly with the volunteer work of Mr. Steve Finnis (ex RWK). The stored material is almost completely audited and we will soon be starting on the display material, with minimal disruption to the public.

8. **Conservation/Collections Care.**

The Trones Wood painting (Collection Number MNERM 818), mentioned above which will be used in the WW1 exhibition, is currently unframed.



Please note conservation of this painting has already been undertaken by Maidstone Museum.

9. **Staffing.** Following staff changes, Rebecca Arnott was recruited as Collections Officer for Maidstone Museums in January 2015. With previously role including audit work at the Royal Engineers Museum Library and Archives, Gillingham, she is working with the rest of the Collections Team and Volunteers on the audit project across all collections.