

Friends of the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire) Newsletter No. 2

September 2013



Mercian Regiment



**Worcestershire &
Sherwood Foresters
Regiment**



Worcestershire Regiment

• News

Many congratulations to Major Stanley George Goodman on reaching the grand old age of 100 this year. He enlisted in 1933 and served with the 2nd Battalion in China and India, rising to become a warrant officer by 1942. He later served with 1 Para in BAOR before being commissioned as a quartermaster. After service with the Gold Coast Regiment his last two postings were with the 1st Battalion in Jamaica and the 7th Battalion in Worcester. He retired in 1967.



Major S G Goodman in 1964

The Museum visitors book has continued to record praise from many of our visitors. One recent visitor commented "Your museum is the best military museum I have had the pleasure of visiting. It has excellent quality detail and content."

The death on 3rd July 2013 at the age of 100 of Maria Pasquinelli, an Italian fascist, was recently reported in the British press. She achieved brief notoriety in 1947 for assassinating Brigadier De Winton, the British brigade commander as he was about to inspect the guard found by the 1st Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment on his HQ in Pola, the principal city on the Istria peninsula. Istria had had a chequered history. It had formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918, when it became part of Italy. In 1945 it and the city of Trieste were administered by the Allied Powers and garrisoned by British and US troops until 1947 when Istria became part of Yugoslavia. This caused deep resentment to the largely Italian population in Pola and prompted Pasquinelli to shoot Brigadier De Winton. She was apprehended by the 1st Battalion guard, tried by a military court and sentenced to death but this was commuted to life imprisonment. While serving her sentence in Italy she was pardoned and released in 1955. Istria now forms part of Croatia.



Maria Pasquinelli

- **Jubilee Medals**



Of the three Jubilee medals struck during Her Majesty The Queen's reign the Silver medal was issued on the restricted scale of 10 per regular battalion and 2 per T A battalion, but the Golden and Diamond medals were awarded to all members of the Armed Forces with over 5 year's service. Two members of WFR received all three medals. They are shown here: on the front left is WO2 (later Lt Col) David Elsam and front right Sgt (later Capt) John Tyson, carrying Cpl (later C/Sgt) Brunt after he won the Queen's Medal at Bisley in 1989.



The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal

- **Recollections**

Ex-Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant 'Dinky' Shaw who was wounded in Burma and worked as a civilian at Norton Barracks after World War Two, recalled an incident early in his service: I always remember my first guard in the 2nd Battalion at Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1926. Sgt Masters was Guard Commander, 'Nutty' Bishop NCO i/c Relief. In the early hours of the morning the sentry, Pte Marsh, turned the guard out. After much commotion we lined up outside and the Guard Commander asked the Sentry who it was. You can imagine how we all felt when he answered "The Devil, Sgt Masters." We could hear the noise of dragging chains and heavy feet. We were much relieved when one of the unit mules came to take the salute. He had broken away from the transport lines. Sgt Jack Masters shouted "Guard to the Madhouse dismiss."



Sergeant ???? Shaw in ????

• ***From the curator, Dr John Paddock***

I have been in post since the beginning of the year, but this is my first opportunity to introduce myself to most of you. I trained as an archaeologist at the Institute of Archaeology, University of London, graduating in 1981 with a First Class Honours Degree in the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces. Between 1981 and 1984, I undertook research for a Ph.D. on Roman Republican bronze helmets, which involved lots of travel throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. I then entered the museum world almost by accident, starting my museum career in 1984 at the Royal Armouries when it was still housed in the Tower of London! I had turned up to volunteer, but was offered a rolling 11 month contract instead! And the rest, as they say, is history.

From the Royal Armouries, I moved first to The Order of St. John, where I worked as assistant curator from 1986 to 1988 and then to the City and County Museum Lincoln as Assistant Keeper of Archaeology for eighteen months. From March 1990 until March 2011 I worked at the Corinium Museum in Cirencester; firstly as Keeper of Archaeology, then for eleven years as Curator. Finally I was appointed Head of Cultural services and I led the £6.5 million refurbishment of the Corinium Museum which transformed it into an award winning Museum:

- Winner Small Visitor Attraction of the Year (South West Region) 2008;
- Winner of the Gloucestershire Leisure and Tourism business of the Year 2006;
- Shortlisted for European Museum of the Year 2005.

More recently I have been acting as an educational consultant to Poulton Parish Council for their HLF "Table Top Tombs Project" and lecturing on archaeology and local history. I am a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and also of Scotland, and have been an Associate Member of the Museums Association since 1993.

I am thoroughly enjoying coming to the museum each day and working with our Trustees and volunteers. I appreciate how much I have to learn, but each day I discover a little more!

One of the important roles for a curator is to find objects that will enhance the collection and my first recommendation to the Trustees, which has been accepted, was a British, 1839 Pattern, percussion smooth bore musket to complete our Sikh war case display and to fill a major gap in our firearms collection.

The 29th Regiment was equipped with the 1839 pattern musket during in the Sikh Wars. Although the musket is fitted with the most up to date percussion ignition system the weapon's smooth bore limited its accuracy. Its effective range was between fifty to a hundred yards and it fired a solid lead ball of 3/4" calibre (approximately 18mm). The musket is 55 1/2" in length with a 39" barrel. This is marked with the Board of Ordnance proof marks. The barrel is equipped with a standing foresight and a plain rear sight. The musket has a side action lock which is engraved with a Crown over the letters VR (Victoria Regina) set above an Enfield stamp. The lock bears also a crowned broad arrow Ordnance mark and is dated 1841. The lock itself is retained by 2 side nails equipped with brass Lovell cups. The full stock is of the New Land pattern style with brass furniture including a plain brass fore-end cap for a socket bayonet and three ramrod pipes retaining the original ramrod. The musket has two sling swivels, one mounted from the trigger guard, the other above the front ramrod tube.

This musket will shortly go on display in the Worcestershire Soldier gallery in the Sikh War case and replaces an item loaned from the Royal Armouries that has recently been returned; I am proudly holding it in the photograph on the previous page.



The Museum Collection is very rich in weapons from 1850's onward but there are significant gaps in our earlier holdings; for example we do not have either a Long Land or Short Land pattern Musket (the famous "Brown Bess") with which the regiment was equipped throughout the campaigns of the 18th century, including the American War of Independence, or indeed a 1796 pattern Officer's spadron which was carried throughout the Napoleonic Wars. We are actively seeking to fill these gaps and good examples are available from reputable dealers from time to time! Any offers of assistance will be gratefully received.



Brown Bess musket

1796 pattern officer's sword

- ***Another Recent Acquisition***



This exquisitely engraved cow's horn was the first object purchased by The Friends for the Museum. The vendor bought it in an antique shop in Salisbury in the 1950s.

The metal rim suggests that it may have been an 18th century powder horn but the engraving, which includes the 36th Regiment's 19th century battle honours, indicates that it is of later date. The Hindoostan honour was not conferred on the Regiment until 1848.

We cannot be sure of the identity of the William Newton whose name appears in the engraving, but a likely candidate is a private of that name who enlisted in 1826, served in the West Indies, North America, and the Ionian Islands and was discharged in 1849. His character and conduct were described as exemplary – 'he is in possession of five good conduct badges with pay and has never been tried by court martial.'

Presumably William Newton had this made as a souvenir of his service, or is it possible that it was presented to him as a keepsake by his Regimental colleagues. We will probably never know, but if you have seen any similar engraved horn items of military significance do please let the curator know.

• From the Archives

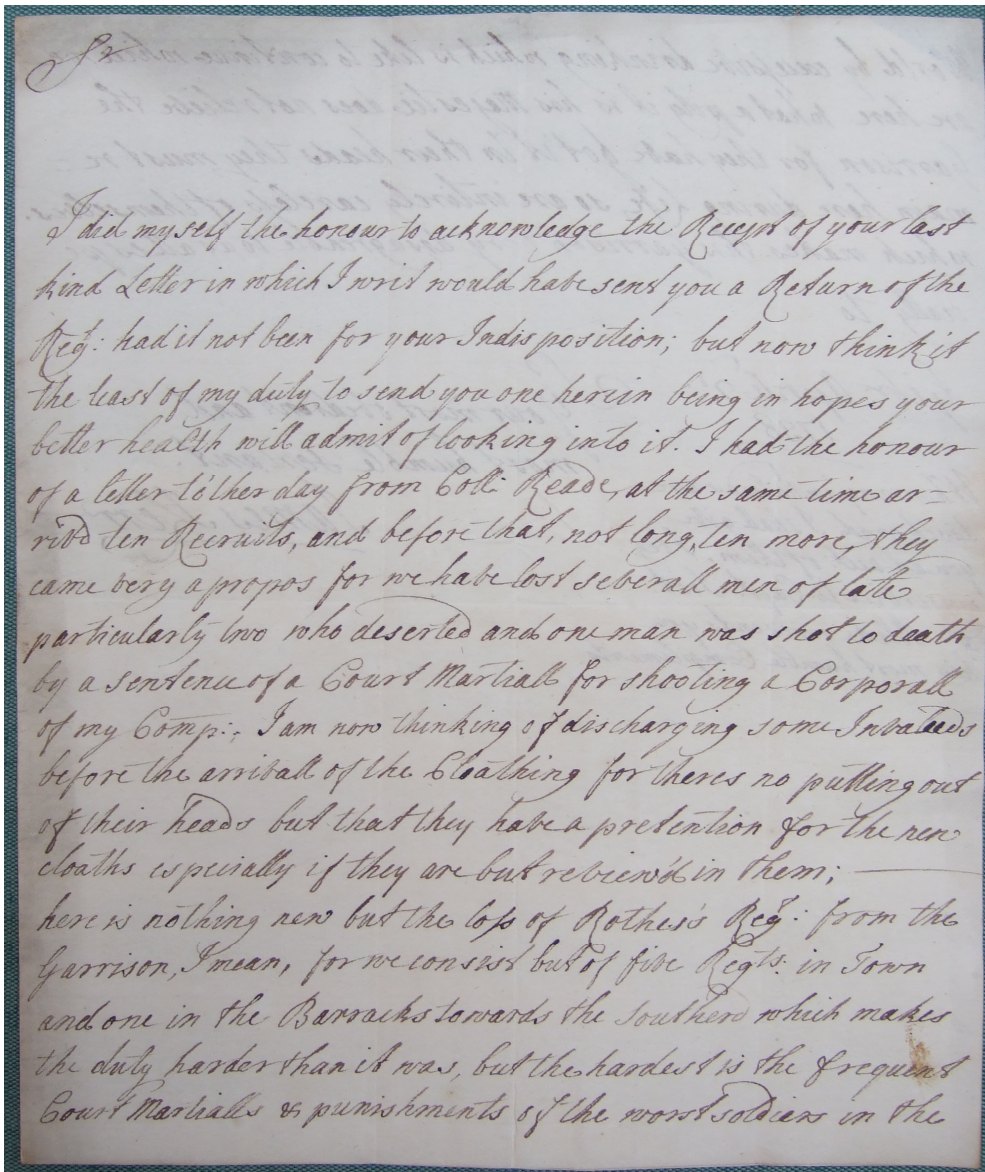
The Wilson Letters : 1717 - 1740

This collection of letters is intriguing because they provide insight into many issues concerning the Regiment at this time, including the saga of Colonel William Kennedy's gout and family issues, but also the more serious question of the provision of uniform for the recruits and the behaviour of the men bored by inactivity while based in Gibraltar. Captain Alexander Wilson was the Regimental Agent.

19th September 1737: letter from Captain James Kerr in Gibraltar to Captain Alex[ander] Wilson in Westminster (quote on the state of the Regiment):

God knows 'tis a Drunken one, two Regimental Court Martials a week, and many a warm back but still Bacchus prevails.....

I'm sorry for poor Billy Kerr's bad luck as well as my own, it is true he has youth on his side but yet if he is not soon mounted, he may have difficulty to get on horseback, for he's as fat as I am lame



30th April 1738: letter from Captain James Kerr in Gibraltar to Lt. Col. William Kennedy in North Brittain [sic].

Billie Kerr who is obliged to you continues here in great health and if he is not mounted in a little time to shake his Belly must have a Louping on Hen.

.....at present no good claret in the Garrison. I wish there were as little strong Spanish wine for it makes very bad soldiers and wears them out before they are old.

2nd April 1738: letter from Captain James Kerr to Lt. Col. William Kennedy

....the hardest [duty] is the frequent Court Martials as punishments of the worst soldiers in the World by excessive drinking which is like to continue while we are

here.....[the men] are entirely careless of themselves which makes this Garrison very disagreeable to us all especially to Your most obedient and most humble servant..

....we have lost several men of late particularly two who deserted and one man was shot to death by a sentence of a Court Martial for shooting a Corporal of my Comp.

15th March 1740: letter from Alex Wilson in Spalding to Lt. Col. William Kennedy in Edinburgh

Lt Hill who changed with Lt Babington has been tried by a Court Martial for beating two sergeants and flayed on his Guard, and the sentence is that he be cashiered, so Col Fuller has recommended Ensign Kinneer in case the King confirms the sentence, as expected. Lt Hill being a very unhappy man.....

Lieutenant Colonel William Kennedy seemed to spend many months, if not years, at home in Edinburgh or Inverness, North Britain [sic], indulging in ill-health (identified as gout) and it would appear he was kept informed of the activities of the garrison by letter! However, when the time came for the King to appoint a new Colonel to the Regiment, William Kennedy's health showed an instant and remarkable improvement. Alex Wilson writes on his behalf to Lord Albermarle ...

12th October 1739: letter from Alex Wilson in Westminster to William Blair Esq.

....such is his Attachment to Duty when action is expected, that as now he finds himself able to bear the passage to Gibraltar, he turns all his thoughts that way. But one thing damps his Spirits the very apprehension of being commanded by a fifth Colonel since he had the honour to be Lieutenant Colonel to the Regiment now vacant: he writes in termes [sic] so moving that I am affraid [sic] 'twill demolish him.

The letters do not reveal the final outcome!

• ***From the Archives***

Over 350 commission documents dating from 1717 to 1952 are stored in the museum. The photograph (below) shows that of William Lord Cathcart of 1792, which is a printed text on vellum with the details added in copper-plate handwriting. At the top left are two seals: one is paper over sealing wax with an embossed stamp on top and the other is a strip of blue paper with a piece of metal inserted in order to prevent forgery. Above the seals is the sovereign's handwritten signature – George III in this case.

Throughout the years the format remains basically the same, but by the 1930s it is reduced to a printed form on paper, filled in by hand, but subsequently typewritten, with only an embossed seal at the top left. The King's signature, now George VI, is applied with a rubber stamp.

Not surprisingly, the signature of George III deteriorated as his illness progressed. An example from 1808 bears witness to this (see illustration below).

The early commissions were issued at 'Our Court at St. James', but from 1846 onwards during Queen Victoria's reign this becomes variously 'Osborne House, Isle of Wight', 'Windsor' or 'Buckingham Palace'.

Officers purchased their commissions ranging from Ensign to Colonel, but there are a few for other ranks such as surgeons, assistant surgeons, quartermasters, instructor of musketry (1866), and a chaplain (1765). It is sometimes possible to pick out two or more commissions for the same officer showing the stages of his promotion.

R Nosworthy became an Ensign in 1789 and a Quartermaster in 1795. Kenrick Verulam Bacon was commissioned as an Ensign in the '2nd Jäger Corps of our British-German Legion' in April 1856 but by

December that year he returned with the same rank to the 29th Foot; in 1862 he was promoted Lieutenant and later that year to Captain.

As well as more usual names like George Brown (Captain, 1842) and Arthur Wood (Surgeon, 1840), some unusual names appear: John Hadock Saul (1790), David Ximenes (1800), Spotswood Bawles (1801) and Arthur de la Poer Beresford-Peirde (1869).



Commission of William Lord Cathcart, 1792



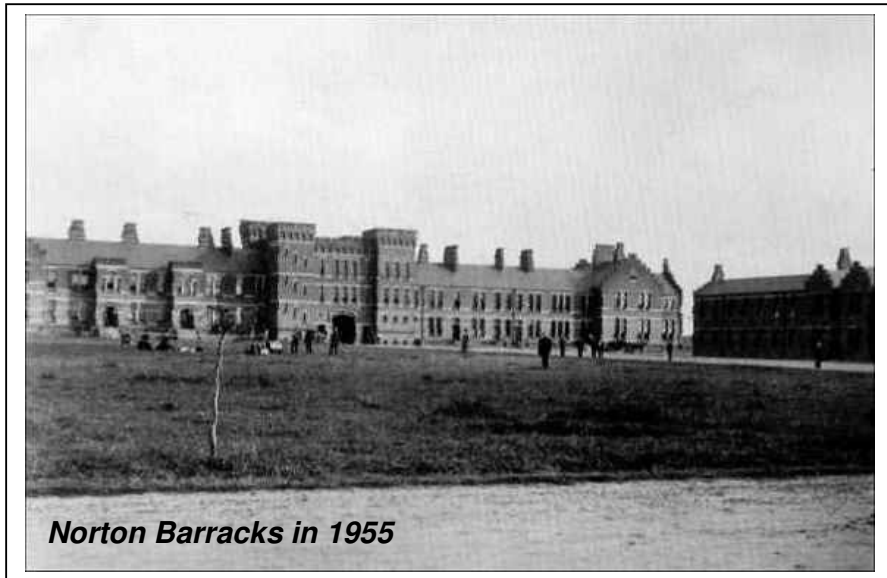
Signature of King George III in 1792



and in 1808

These original Commission documents have now all been collected together and individually protected in acid-free transparent polyester envelopes. They have been indexed and arranged in chronological order in an acid-free card Solander box and may readily be consulted by researchers.

● **The Regiment Departs**



Norton Barracks in 1955

Following the closure of the Regimental HQ the plaintive calls of the Last Post and Reveille echoed over Norton on 20th March 2011 as the Regimental flag was lowered for the last time during a short ceremony to mark the Regiment's final departure from the barracks after 134 years. The newly built barracks was first occupied in 1877 by the depot companies of the 29th and 36th Regiments, followed shortly afterwards by the permanent staff of the two Militia battalions. Recruits for the Regiment were

trained there until 1959, and when the Depot closed the Regimental HQ remained to nurture the Regiment's local roots. The barracks was also occupied by the 1st Battalion for three years in the early 1960s.

The authoritative voice of Sergeant Major Bryn Knowles MBE brought order to the formal part of the ceremony and the Regimental Mascot and his handlers added a dash of colour at the head of the column as the 90 veterans on parade marched out of the Regimental HQ compound for the last time. They were led by the Standards of the Norton British Legion and local Association branches. The Parade Commander was Colonel John Reynolds MC, who had been the last Commanding Officer of the Depot, and the last five Regimental Secretaries brought up the rear. The salute was taken by Councillor Mrs Linda Robinson, Chairman of Wychavon District Council, and the Mayor of Worcester, Councillor Mike Layland, a former member of the Regiment.



Corporal and Lance Corporal with the regimental mascot

After the ceremony the ladies of the Worcester Branch of the Association served refreshments to the large crowd of over two hundred who attended.

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