

Mapping Museums project interview transcript

Name: Melanie Marsh

Role: Curator/Museum Manager

Museum: Rifles Museum

Location of interview: board room, Rifles Regimental Headquarters, Winchester

Date: 22nd November 2018

Interviewer(s): Toby Butler

Material from the interviews can be downloaded and re-used under the terms set by Creative Commons (CC-BY-4.0). This allows all users to quote from, distribute, remix, and build upon the research, so long as it is attributed.

We recommend that you use the following information when citing the interviews:

Name of interviewee, (year of interview), interviewed by Toby Butler, Mapping Museums project,
Available at www.mappingmuseums.org/interviews Accessed (date)

We would like to know how our research is being used so please use the [Get in Touch](#) link on the Mapping Museums website to tell us about your work.

The project is based at Birkbeck, University of London. The interview recordings and associated materials are archived at the Bishopsgate Library, London.

For readability the transcript has been made using 'intelligent' transcription (removing ums, ers etc).

TB: Could you start by giving us your name and date of birth please

MM: My name is Melanie Louise Marsh and I was born XX-XXX 1988.

TB: Could you just tell us what your role is here and how long you've been working at the Museum.

MM: my role is the curator/museum manager of the Rifles, well as it was the Rifles Collection, and now the Rifles Museum; and I have been employed at the Rifles Museum since the 5th of November 2012.

TB: So could just give us a bit of back story about the museum itself because it was set up fairly recently, just tell the story of how it came about.

MM: So by the time I came on board in November 2012 the Rifles had very much decided that they wanted their own regimental Museum; and to employ a museum curator. At the time of my being employed there were two of us; there was a collections curator and an exhibition curator and my job is the collections curator, obviously working very closely with the exhibitions curator, and my job was to help to bring collections into the museum; start working out what we needed, setting up the policies and things around that; working out what we wanted to collect what sort of things would best illustrate the story of the regiment from 2007 to the present day and into the future. There is a colleague of mine Rob Yuill who was employed as the exhibitions curator and his job was very much working with the practicalities of the space that we had.

So as far as I'm aware and some of my knowledge of the negotiations with the MOD is a little bit sketchy; but the MOD had that building over the way I'm sure you've been to visit. Now the Green Jackets Museum is in there and it also used to be Where the Light Infantry Museum was and the Light Infantry Museum moved down to Bodmin in Cornwall.

TB: Why is that? Is that where the regiment went?

MM: I can't remember whether the Light Infantry did it before or after the Rifles were formed, I apologise, my background on that is not 100% certain. It became Cornwall's Regimental Museum and I imagine if you ask them they will be able to tell you the date that the Light Infantry collection went down there. [it was 2010 TB] Anyway, the space was empty before we came, but obviously it had last been done, I think they refurbished it as a museum back in the early 90s so were sort of working with the existing infrastructure in there. But obviously as it was done in the early 90s it was very contemporary to the Green Jackets Museum so in some respects us having a similar looking, in terms of aesthetic space to the Green Jackets, who we were now co-housed with, sort of works.

TB: Were the Green Jackets one of your constituent regiments that then became the Rifles.

MM: Yes that's right.

TB: So just explain to the uninitiated a little bit about the regimental history the fact that the Rifles were formed in 2007 but they went back a long way through for different regiments.

MM: So the Rifles were formed in 2007, the 1st of February 2007 and it's from four regiments; the Royal Green Jackets; the Light Infantry the Devon and Dorsets and the Royal Gloucester's, Berkshire's and Wiltshire's.

TB: OK, are all of regiments geographically local to here?

MM: The Royal Gloucester's, Berkshire's and Wiltshire's and the Devon and Dorsets are local to their counties. The Royal Green Jackets always has a connection to Winchester so the Rifles depot was here and things like that. And then like wires the Light Infantry always had a connection down here. And this building that we're Saturn used to be the headquarters of both the Royal Green Jackets and The Light infantry.

[00:04:15]

TB: Ok so in terms of the space and the location this made total sense in that respect.

MM: It did yes. In terms of how long-term everything stays here with MOD changes, that's always up in the air but obviously this was the space that was very much given to us by the MOD it was an empty Museum space. We were being based here so it made perfect sense to go and utilise that space to start forming the Rifles Museum.

TB: Just tell me about the collection so presumably you inherited four sets of stuff but of course one of those museums was clearly up and running and in fact there already so you didn't need to worry about the Green Jackets so tell me about the other three how did that work in terms of museums already or what is more kind of collections that were in Barrack rooms or whatever or private?

[00:05:12]

MM: All of them actually have their own museums so the Light Infantry is also one of our forming regiments who used to be co-located there so they moved down to Cornwall and became part of Cornwall's regimental Museum and they are a fully accredited museum in their own right. There is the Royal Gloucesters Berkshire and Wiltshires collection which is over at the Rifles Berkshire and Wiltshire Museum in Salisbury which is again fully accredited and the Devon and Dorset's collection is down at the keep in Dorchester and again a fully accredited Museum. So all four of the forming regiments had their own well-established accredited museums. And they still have to this day.

TB: Which kind of means you have got nothing!

MM: Which kind of means you have nothing which slightly explains why we came in and how Rob I worked; which is why on day one we were both handed a blank slate which in some respects is really nice and in some other respect is really daunting. Which is why our collections remit (we were always told to and always have) started at 2007, 1st of February 2007 is where our collection remit goes from. And likewise the Royal Green Jackets, I'm just using them as an example as they are our neighbours across the way, their collection remit ends on the 31st of January 2007. So just in terms of how we look at dates and how we view things and that's the same with all four of those museums; so it means we're very contemporary in terms of our collecting and things. And everything we acquire is contemporary so obviously it was then but we've already have 5 years of the regiment doing things before we came in before the end of 2012 so as we were sort of trying to make the space adapt or look the sort of contemporary space we wanted; we were also at the same time setting up a collections policy and going what actually is out there? What sort of things do we want to start collecting? So very much setting up that side of things.

[00:07:01]

TB: So tell me some more about that. I guess it starts off in Iraq. So you have from that point certain regiments, looking around the museum there are so many things aren't there there is souvenirs ephemera uniforms and medals I don't have that kind of stuff. So what were the big decisions and how are they made about exactly what you were going to collect.

MM: The Rifles have a heritage committee and the heritage committee were very good at setting direction for the two of us as curators and they were very clear on what sort of things they wanted for that collections development policy. There were very clear it would be 2007 onwards. Because obviously we are very conscious that there are four wonderful, fully accredited museums to do with our forming regiments and obviously we would very much still want items to be going to them and that support to them. So obviously we started setting that up and the Collections development policy that I ended up drafting I actually went to the heritage committee and it went to the regiment and everyone just sort of looked it over and checked that they were happy with what we talked about, what we were collecting, how we had aspired to collect and things. Very much not collecting for the sake of collecting because I think sometimes when you start off with a blank slate it is really tempting to just go with will take anything but we have to be mindful of if something is beyond repair we can't take it, or if we already have five sets of the same jacket we don't want those; so how we approached it was - we are in 2012 we are completely out of Iraq and we are in Afghanistan. So what they started doing was sending wish lists out the battalions so we were a bit like 'we are trying to collect from Afghanistan, and your favourite now so please send us items, please send us kit that you've worn with significant stories, please come in and do some oral history recordings, and we're also going out to the regiment and going, 'and also anyone who's been there for the last 5 years would you like to come and record about Iraq, do you still have your old uniform that you wore in Iraq, because we've be interested do you still have this, do you still have that, so it is that sort of double approach. I think collecting has got even easier since 2012 I think that's why we're slightly stronger on Afghanistan because the museum was there for the last 3 years of those operations and everything that's happened since because the museum has always been there. We are now aware that the regiment knows about us so anything significant, anything that they think is interesting they are like 'Oh, we will send this back to the museum'.

[00:09:54]

Which means we have an incredibly active collecting policy. I know some museums just have a no collecting anymore. some are like we could only take it if it's really important, and we are still very much always actively seeking to tell these stories and that everything goes forward in the future if there's a huge operation starting tomorrow, we will be desperately keen to get whatever new items come along or stem from that.

[00:10:19]

TB: That's fascinating and also quite unusual I guess and as much as from the beginning to be able to actually proactively be out there with the serving troops as opposed to daily with the 18th century or the second World War or whatever. It's not retired people is it you're looking at although I'm sure there are lots of ex-serving people that have been involved, but you are dealing with people who have been in battle type situations and I imagine that must have its own set of challenges. I'm just

thinking of things like oral history you know asking someone to reminisce about pretty dramatic stuff. Did you find it problematic or was everyone very happy to do that?

[00:11:17]

MM: A lot of the people be asked to record oral history with very much voluntary and a lot of people would just recording a lot more about the experiences and there was a lot more things that we were keen to capture. Particularly we were very conscious that with having the modern side sometimes we were slightly trying to explain what people were doing in Iraq and Afghanistan; because members of the public, even though they constantly saw the operations and what was going on on TV, and that media aspect of War had been going on and they understood that side of things; but sometimes the why about it all wasn't always explained; so we found that often that question was coming out a lot with visitors. So a lot of our recordings are very much soldiers explaining different things in their own words, but a lot more about, with Iraq we were really keen to get them talking about their experience of what Basra was actually like as a city. Because in some respects everyone hears the, it sounds really cliched, really awful for me to say, but everyone knows the experience of what it's like to be a soldier, but I don't think a lot of visitors have always got the background context as to what Basra was like. You know a lot of US soldiers were talking about seeing people walking around in jeans and t-shirts and just looking like everyday people on the street over in this country. And I thought some of that was actually really nice to pull in. So we recorded us all just talking a lot about that. I've actually one of our biggest things that our oral history project I've been working on is actually recording the soldiers explaining the kids and the equipment that they using. Not so much with security levels of sensitive equipment but a bit more like this is the helmet this is how it goes together, this is how it all works, this is why I wear this, this is why I do that. Sometimes it is just nice I think for the public instead of me turning around and saying this is a combat jacket and it has this this and this functionality, it is just nice to hear a soldier talking about it in his own words. And that's what we were trying to introduce in the museum. So our oral history project was a lot more to do with, instead of always having the curators voice as the narrative between the object of the visitor, trying to get a lot more of these recordings so that we could start to use those, as the soldier's voice would be that narrative between. So we have brought a lot more of those up than we have actually managed to use, so our touchscreens have started doing that, and we are actually looking at ways to increase that a lot more in the museum, so we are constantly trying to develop the museum space to be more what we wanted.

[00:14:01]

TB: From the beginning did you have or were you told who the key audience was for this museum? Just looking around, any military museum, I'm very aware that there are basically two audiences, there's people in the regiment and their families, and their descendants, and then there's everyone else. I was wondering if there was any discussion about that balance and how that works.

MM: So we were obviously very conscious when we were setting up, I always think museums have, now let's see if I can remember them when we were talking about an audience development recently, we always said there were five known visitors to a military museums. Even if you did no advertising you are still going to get the Regiment; you would still get your military enthusiasts, you're still get your family historical researchers, and now I can't remember the other two! Let me grab my notebook.

[recording paused]

MM: We would be able to access those 5 audiences and obviously we would set things up and we would support them to come because that's great they're brilliant that's I call audience; and then we've always been working and setting up different things to try and attract wider audiences, and we do a lot of work with families to try and bring them in a lot more. Because sometimes I think being a very modern military museum, families might think 'ooh is that actually where I want to go for a day out?' so we've just been trying to show how accessible we actually are from day one.

TB: yes it's nice to see the try on uniforms and the photo opportunities, it's really nice. I'm sorry, the last two audiences were families...

MM: The regiment, the family of the Regiment, academic researchers, military history enthusiasts and family history researchers.

TB: So they are the core audiences but museums can't sustain themselves without broadening out a little bit.

MM: Yes.

TB: that's your core audience is I guess regiments and those first five would you say?

MM: Yes that is very much like audience. And to always looking for ways to basically engage with the local community, become part of their history, and always looking at ways of bringing more families into the museum and showing herself as that family friendly destination for a day out. That's where Winchester Military Museums works for us, it's very much that partnership but helps us provide a full days offer that we might not be able to have on our own.

TB: could you just tell us about that because I was quite surprised to find six museums on this site; so could you just quickly explain what that is, this military alliance or whatever that you've got here, just in a nutshell.

MM: So I'm like the New Kid On The Block to do with this, the other museums have all been in this organisation for longer than ours has existed. It is just a partnership between all of the six museums here on site. We work together for joint incentives and marketing, creating a day offer, we have a day ticket now. So we've all got our own individual Museum trusts and our own individual board of trustees, and her own objectives, but obviously working together makes us a lot stronger to help us achieve those objectives.

[00:17:52]

TB: Yes and I think as a tourist offer, to come here and to be able to pick and choose three or four things is pretty amazing. Tell me more about the site itself it was a military barracks for a long time, but clearly things changed around 2008 that sort of time. It then became private accommodation, a lot of it is that right?

MM: That's right I think what a bit of touch earlier than that but it was the early 2000s, I think 2003, 2004. It became as he said private accommodation so obviously there was a long history with the site going all the way back almost to Napoleonic times actually. So it started off as, there was the Old

Castle on here so people would come up that's a where's the Old Castle at Winchester? And you have to explain it's no longer here on this Hill. And I don't know if you know there's an older history with Kings House here, where they were going to build a Palace to rival Versailles but it never got completed. It ended up being burnt down and all that remains of the original is the pediments in one of the private residential blocks. So it was used by the army obviously. The fountain area is the old parade Square. The MOD, I don't know a lot about the context of this because it's before my time, but obviously the land of sold off and some was kept for the museums and the buildings you see here today and the rest of the buildings, because they're listed, were just converted into residential accommodation.

TB: I see thank you. In terms of the gallery space and the plans that you had. Can you tell us a little bit more about what you wanted to achieve in the gallery. And maybe some of the inspiration that you had, I don't know if you are inspired by other museums or collections, but just a little bit more on that would be great.

MM: So obviously we will working within the structure that we had. In the early days a lot of the knocking down of different walls and different things was led very much by Rob. So we try to make, it still doesn't quite flow perfectly but we've tried to make it flow little bit better than what it did in the existing space. Generally a lot of the inspiration was to try and utilise quotes and different things. What we have put on display out of our collections was very much that we wanted to tell stories. And it was very much about the stories of individuals. So we were very conscious that people do want to know about Iraq, Afghanistan, the different operations and things, but we thought what better way to tell them and try and pull out the individual stories. And hopefully the majority of our objects on display very much linked to an individual story. And that's always been the mentality that we've gone with for the display. We started trying to use quotations and trying to use a bit more recordings and that's where our oral history site comes in. We are trying to get people to talk about a lot more in their own words to really bring those objects to life. So that's always been the idea.

[00:21:12]

TB: and also has really struck by the fact that there is photography and art, the photography is quite strong isn't it.

MM: It is but that's at the moment. That space at the back that is all completely white is our temporary exhibition gallery, so it's a different colour to try and separate it off from the rest of the museum. Because our ceiling is black everyone kept saying gosh it's much brighter in here, but actually the light level is no different it's actually the difference between a white ceiling and a black ceiling. That was very much done with the intention of, we couldn't always put every single story out on display. So obviously wanted to put more objects and bring more objects out of the store and change things around to constantly show people different things. So that was part of it, and the second part of it was to do with we wanted to do more programming. So having different themed exhibitions every six months and then having our events and our activities centred around those. So as I talked about audience, it is very much linked to bringing in a new and diverse audiences and always making sure that we have something interesting on offer in the museum, so it's not the same visit every single time you come. So at the moment it's got a photography exhibition in, our next

exhibition is going to be very much linked to women coming and joining The Rifles in their own right, which should be quite interesting.

[00:22:37]

TB: I noticed on the comments book a comment saying it's nice to see some women in this gallery. you were a new Regiment but clearly all of the individuals that were there on day one, I imagine almost all, came from the older regiments, is that right, or did they recruit total novices from the day the regiment started?

MM: As in those that made up the regiment themselves?

TB: yes did they come from those four constituent regiments?

MM: Yes they did yes.

TB: so I'm just wondering how you found it in terms of dealing with those pre-existing museums but also just thinking about the people from those regiments, the people have gone from one to the other, you were feeling very symbolically with shifts of identity aren't you, I was just wondering how you managed that, or tell me a little more about the issues around that.

[00:23:35]

MM: I think I probably didn't have a lot of experience of that because obviously I came five years in and the identity was well and truly set by then. I have met people who were obviously in a different Regiment so say in the Devon and Dorsets or the Green Jackets and they had been cap-badged Rifles. But obviously by that point, I think they were very good at identifying as Rifles. The Rifles did handle it rather well actually. I noticed that a lot of people, wherever they were in the world, and that's why we chose the one at Basra Palace because we thought that was a little bit quirky; whatever they were in the world the Rifles did a cap badge changing ceremony on the 1st of February. And sometimes I think doing a bit of a ceremony really helps bring the new identity to life from day one. And I think it was very well handled actually. Because the Scots regiments, they put all the regiments names in brackets for each battalion, whereas the Rifles just went fully, blank slate, your 1st Battalion the Rifles, you are 2nd Battalion the Rifles and so forth.

[00:24:46]

TB: and do you think the museum has a role in maintaining and I supposed defining the identity of the Regiment in an ongoing way

MM: I'd like to think so; I'd like to think, for example as women are coming into the Regiment we are doing something to celebrate that actually in the museum. We are very much talking about all the women that have ever been attached and have worked with in the Rifles in the past and showcasing how it is all going to be moving forward in the future. So hopefully we are always sort of reflecting that identity. And I think also hopefully for anyone who is looking to come and join the regiment, we are hopefully inspirational enough for them to go with 'that was really inspiring, that was really engaging, I think that's the regiment that I would like to be involved with if I'm joining the army.'

TB: Yes I did notice that there were some recruitment material and posters, and for a live regiment that is clearly an important constituent part of what you are doing. Do you have careers events or anything like that as part of the Museum?

MM: No not really the Rifles have their own recruiting team that's a very good at going out and sending those messages and actually in fairness to them the recruitment team are very good at handing out the museum's brochures for us, more than we are actually at posting the recruiting events, they are very good to us.

TB: Just tell me about yourself what is it about this topic or area that excites you and why did you decide to come into this particular sphere of Museum work?

MM: I have an MA in Museum Studies and I worked for the National Trust and I was a manager there for a few years. And actually saw the job advertised and I kept umming and arring about it. I just thought that it sounded really exciting. So obviously the job advert was very much a 'we are setting up a new Museum; we are looking for a curator to be involved and we are looking for this sort of person' and I thought that sounds really interesting. So I came and I have a little nosy around, I saw the space I saw what they were working towards, I researched the regiment a little bit, and I thought this does sound interesting, maybe I'll apply for that, I put in for the job and I got the job obviously the rest is history really. It is just being constantly dynamic but I actually really like that I think maybe it is my background of the National Trust or maybe just the way I am. I always like things to be on the go and moving and I don't think I could ever be at a museum that is just happy to tick along; because it's a young Regiment it has naturally led to quite a dynamic Museum which is actually really nice to work for.

[00:27:50]

TB: what's the relationship like with the regiment? I noticed that the headquarters are based here as well, they are literally just down the corridor, so you can't get much closer than that. So that's really interesting I think, do you have much to do with each other? Tell me, how does that work?

MM: So obviously my office is in the same building, even if the museum isn't and the regimental headquarters are really supportive of the museum. The regiment has its own communication channels, like its own Facebook, as we have a museums one, they are amazing at cross-sharing and promoting our events and things for us. They are really great at getting the regiment involved in the museum. Our regiment are really good at coming and visiting, really good at organising days out here, and I think a lot of that is to do with the regimental headquarters' influence because we are also closely located, they know what we're doing, we know what they are doing, and just having that brilliant channel of communication really does help the museum.

[00:28:53]

TB: and also there's an element of the exhibition space, which I have seen in every single one of the museums, I've been to three today, there is a memorial, roll of honour section and for me that was incredibly moving because it's such a recent thing, seeing so many people have died already when it says only been going for a few years, so just tell me about that space. Is it used by the regiment as a ceremonial space or is there a chapel somewhere else where all of that happens. Is it one of the symbol of that or is that a working memorial space that the regiment uses?

MM: It is not really used by the Regiment. The regiment obviously has its roll of honour and book of remembrance, it is down in Winchester Cathedral. And Winchester Cathedral has a very strong link to the Regiment. And likewise Salisbury Cathedral and I can't remember the name of the other cathedral in Oxford off the top of my head, so there are different places like that all around that the regiment go to for their roll of honour and book of remembrance. Our Remembrance space it's a bit of an odd one actually, even for us. I don't think I've ever worked in a museum or anywhere that has a space grow so organically all by itself. Rob and I as curators, we thought, we have talked all about his different things we can't possibly not put up a roll of honour in the museum, because that just felt like the right thing to do in a military Museum. In the others, you have to show, even though it was very recent, you have to show the roll of honour. So we spent a lot of time thinking about where to hang these two boards with all the names on. And then we said we can't put it at the end because then it's the last thing that you remember. We don't want to put it at the beginning; so we went backwards and forwards with all the different spaces and we thought we're going to put it squarely in the middle, we are going to put it right in the middle of the museum. So those went in there. And that space was originally a lot more open so there's a case that is actually movable, it's got some stories from Afghanistan on it, and on the other side there's the portraits of the Fallen by Arabella Dorman. As we have the rolls of honour, what we found was that as we came up to her first ever Remembrance Day, members of the public were staying around there and people were leaving poppies in there and things. So we were a bit like oh, the public rather like this as a space; so we thought what can we do to close it off a little bit more so we slightly closed it off by moving this case; it was at a different angle, we change the angle round to make it feel a bit more of a self-contained space which is why it's not a part of the whole Museum journey. So you can go around all the rest of the museum without going into that space, or you can go just directly into that space. Which part of the museums journey but we didn't make it as a part of everyone who has to go into because obviously were very mindful, we've got this modern Regiment, they may not always want to deal with it, and then we will have some people who only want to go just for that.

The next thing that happened was we ended up with the memorial Cross that came out of Afghanistan. So as they were closing down from Afghanistan all these memorial crosses that were made, I don't know if you've seen it, it's made out of pallets, as a part of an act of remembrance by the actual army and the Regiment whilst they are out there. And what happens is you generally tend to get one in each key patrol base and people put on the metal plaques for members of the regiment that were killed in action. So they are very well made and well-crafted. And as they were closing down Afghanistan, all of those started going into Camp Bastion, which was the sort of headquarters of it, and then that was the last place they were closing down. So they had all these different memorial crosses and lots of them are going to the Imperial War Museum and the national Army Museum and things, and the MOD was doing the sorting out of this closing down of Camp Bastion. And they got in touch with us and said, and 'we have this memorial Cross and it is only got one name on it, and it's a Rifles one. It's one of the smaller the moral crosses, it's got your name on and we thought that we could offer it to someone else but the Imperial War Museum at the national Army Museum have taken the ones with lots of names on, there's five for the Scots which have gone to the Scots, so we thought you may want this one because it's the only one that's solely Rifles'. Because I think the MOD very much feel that, so we would have taken one even say it had six Rifles names on and one from the Royal logistic Corps. It wouldn't be quite right to take it. Where else obviously there is a whole lot less ethics if we take the one that just has the Rifles name on. So

we took that and we put it out on display in the museum and people kept coming, because then we had made a remembrance space for them, we had the rolls of honour there, and there was a cross and there was this physical memorial.

So by the time Remembrance came the next year people were leaving poppies, they were leaving messages and things, we were having lots of people coming and spending time in the space, quiet time, family members, friends of those who were killed, really relishing the quiet time. So by this point, this was when it was solely myself as curator, I thought oh my goodness I have made a memorial space and I have not properly accommodated or properly put this together. So we thought how do we feel about this? And most thought we actually like the public using it we like the fact that you come in to remember, it's really nice way of engaging and connecting, particularly around Remembrance Day. So we used what collection we had to set up the space. There's chairs in that area as opposed to other areas; we have chairs there so if you want to go and have a sit down, have a quiet contemplative think, you are more than welcome to. There's the portraits of the Fallen there that we have, and we have a couple of prints and different items that were given to the museum, just to help bring that area altogether with that message. And we also got permission from one of the families who had actually presented it to the RGQ here, we have a Jewish Torah that was carried by a World War II soldier, that the family handed on to a Jewish Rifleman and this Jewish Rifleman was unfortunately killed in action. And the family gave the Torah framed to RHQ here so we got in touch with them and we said can we have that on display and we have got a couple of other Remembrance items off families that we knew were involved there. And how we found those families was that we actually just went into the museum around the remembrance week, and they were already in there and they were very happy to talk and very happy to be part of this; and now we've just got this really nice Remembrance area that's very much for the public and very much for the family and friends of the Regiment. I understand the memorial cross is actually a physical Cross which is a Christian symbol but I like to think of it as a lot more of a neutral space that is not actually to do with religion, it is just a space to have that quiet moment of contemplation and it just feels a little bit more off the main Museum journey. Because I always think it's a Modern museum, I love having noise, I love having children running around dressing up because that's what this is all about, its modern it's innovative, it's engaging and we can be that sort of space. But that area I just wanted to have that slightly more quiet air to it.

[00:36:49]

TB: Well I think it's very powerful. I was there alone but I was quite moved by it. I'm curious as to how families use, you have already mentioned that that's a very powerful space for them but are there other ways that members of the regiment and their families here's the gallery that you have observed. I imagine it's got lots of different functions but does anything spring to mind?

MM: The Remembrance gallery or all the galleries?

TB: more broadly; clearly as a symbolic space and it contains a lot of quite personal things to I was just wondering if you have noticed different ways that people respond to it.

[00:37:46]

MM: The regiment I think for the rest of the museum galleries, the Regiment love coming in and particularly if they have given us an item or loaned us something, we very much like to take that personal story. And I think there's always that really nice element of having been featured in the museum and feeling like you were involved in creating the regiment's history. Going into the future you know if you have given that item with that personal story in a 100, 200 years later that objects on that personal story is still going to be around and that museum, so there is that really nice legacy building that the regiment really enjoys doing and we enjoy engaging with them over.

For the families I think we try, particularly because we have got two very local regiments, we try to get them involved in our family activities and different things; but they are very much the same as the local Winchester families involved, we just want to make it feel like it is accessible for everyone.

[00:38:48]

TB: You are almost writing people into history aren't you, quite literally. And to have that on the back of the Green Jacket exhibition where you have the Battle of Waterloo, it's really quite amazing isn't it, being a part of that long duration.

MM: Definitely I think it's really nice; the Green Jackets have the character rifleman Benjamin Harris who is in the 95th Rifles as they went to the Battle of Waterloo. And he wrote his diary and his memoirs and he features a lot of the museum, his personal voice comes through a lot in some of the Waterloo displays. And I always think it's really nice for them to be able to see, for anyone I imagine actually, to be able to see yourself in the same light as 'I have contributed a piece of History' you know just as I can see that guy and what he did 200 years ago because he wrote it down and gave his personal story. I've just done the same, in 200 years time people are going to look at mine and know what I was doing on that day, or what happened that sort of thing, it's really nice.

[00:39:57]

TB: Is there anything else you want to add please do...

MM: I think the hardest thing is working within an existing space and trying to make that adaptable for your purpose and different things, and building on that going forward.

TB: Do you have any plans or things that you're doing in the future for the museum, or things that you'd like to change?

MM: In terms of the museum going forwards I'm still working with him that space and as I said hopefully that temporary exhibition space we will start to be able to bring out more stories. We've done one touring exhibition so far, and we are hoping to try and start doing some more of those. And use those to get more of our collections and their stories out there, I'm sure everyone who has done this so said museums are expensive things to run and expensive to keep going, so that way of engaging with people it's a really nice one for us to do, just changing exhibitions, sending out touring ones, hopefully go to other museums and likewise we are more than happy to take touring exhibitions from others. So hopefully it helps us all develop our ways of working.

TB: Beyond the six Winchester museums do you have a support network more widely; it is quite a distinct area of museums isn't it?

MM: Yes, so there's Winchester military museums here. We have the Southern Army Museums network which is all the MOD funded museums in the Southern region and we get together for meetings, to compare different she's in talks, which is a bit bigger than the Winchester museums one for us. We have the Rifles Museum network, which is a little bit different, because we have the four forming regiments who are MOD funded but then as I mentioned about the Council of Independently run Museums, those come along to it as well. So sometimes they will have slightly different objectives for particular years, because of what the council said, or what the council in that area is going for, needing objects things like that. But we have all sort of got a similar, well it's all part of that regimental history and regimental story so it's really nice to get together and work out what we're doing, and almost cross-sharing ideas, and that one is the better network in that respect because somebody is doing something totally new, you know I don't get to see Durham City Council that often so obviously when we all get together for a meeting, 'hey what are you doing there or that's a nice idea we might try that down in Winchester thanks'. That sort of thing. And then we have the Army Museums Ogilby Trust (AMOT), which looks after all, I believe it is around 140 military museums within the country. I think just over that actually. They look after all of those and they organise all of us having a large get together once a year between all of those museums, and we usually have that at the National Army Museum. So that's a really nice network and that's amazing to get together and hear, I mean that's all across the UK, all of these different stories are coming from. And then there's the National Army Museum which is the big ultimate MOD funded Museum in Chelsea in London. And they are really great source of support for us as a small military museum.

TB: Really, in what way, training?

[00:43:32]

MM: All the things actually training is one of the big ones but coming for the National Trust I was very much used to, even though you are at your property, you have got all those other properties that you can call upon as you've got your regional headquarters and then you've got the national headquarters at Swindon. And I think when I first started military museum so only just starting to go along that way, I know what we are free match got with the National Army Museum is, they are that national support network so if we need an advocacy voice, they are the bigger and louder voice to shout for us, because there are National Museum and they really hold that sway. Even when it's just things like we are planning an exhibition and we are a bit short of a few exhibition cases. And they are a few thousand per exhibition case. So obviously a phone call to our big national that looks after us, and they said don't worry we're sure we've got some spare. As I've got us over to us. We will probably just have to arrange a transport of them. So they are that sort of resource for us. When are the talking a little bit about photography, I was a bit like 'I'm not entirely sure of the history to do with the army and photography'. And they were like 'don't worry, we have got our experts here, we have got a reference library, come on down have a read through the books, have a chat with us, let's see if we can help you put something together'. So they're that resource as well as the free much practical side of training they have their own specialists in different fields, whether that is social media and marketing for museums, so they can run and put on a course to do with that because they hire their own specialists and we can all go to them, they can come to us and give us a bit of extra help. So that's actually really important to us as an MOD Museum.

[00:45:20]

TB: Do you think there is more in the way of networking even than the historic building area; in comparison is there much more support?

MM: I don't know in the historic building area as a whole actually, I think it was just this was my first ever job coming out of university was with the National Trust and at first you think I've got some in this property on my own and then you realise you got all those other properties you can talk to you and all those different layers. And then when I came here to work in the MOD Museum, where was Winchester Military Museums, but there wasn't the same... the Southern Army Museums Network didn't exist; AMOT did exist and AMOT started doing their conferences and started to get people together, so there were these steps on the right direction. But I would say very much now, if we have not got all the way there we are very, very close to it. We do feel a lot more support.

[00:46:18]

TB: that's interesting so this is all quite recent these networks are quite new things, some of them anyway.

MM: Yes the AMOT one has been going a lot longer. I remember going to that when I first started. Winchester military museums is a lot longer, but not the southern army museums network. And then the National Army Museum used to do, they have always had a regimental liaison officer, who is very supportive and goes around. But they have put a lot more members into that team now, and they do a lot more work, as do AMOT, as do the southern army museums network.

TB: So this is capacity-building isn't it; with the burgeoning of regimental museums there's more demand for that kind of service.

MM: Yes I think there has always been more demand for it and I think also you always need a centre hub to help all of you, that central hub that you go back to for support, I think the National Army Museum was very much the natural leaders in that. They are the national one after all. So I think it was very much then bringing that vision out and I think actually that's a lot more, they have got a new director. Justin Maciejewski and I think it's a lot of his vision of that support coming out a lot more. It was already moving in that direction; he has really I think been keen on answering that. And that's actually really nice, it's nice to be able to go, I don't think it's quite there when I first started, but it's really nice for example, because of all the networks, this one was actually through the AMOT network where we all got together nationally, I learnt that there what's the Scots Regimental Museum up in Edinburgh, and that museum well their regiment was formed in 2006; and their museum was formed in 2012/13. And we found each other was a conference, and it was like oh my goodness, could there be a museum in a more similar situation to me. So feeling a bit of a kindred spirit with that curator there it is always been really great. We have got this or we're not sure what I'm doing with that or what do you do with this, and just that cross-sharing of ideas has been really, really helpful and really useful.

[00:48:42]

TB: What has been the biggest challenge would you say of taking on something like this? What was the toughest thing you had to deal with?

MM: I think getting too accreditation was actually the toughest thing. Getting ready, getting everything perfect, all that museum Trust paperwork, making sure we were achieving the standards that we wanted to achieve. Saying that though I am a huge supporter of our accreditation actually.

[00:49:14]

TB: why did you decide to go for accreditation?

MM: Obviously part of it is to do with the fact that as part of our MOD objectives, the MOD do help fund these museums by providing the infrastructure and supporting that sort of sense, you know the building, the utilities. And one of their objectives for that is that they want their museums to be fully accredited. And I think because as a standards thing, it shows that we are achieving their standards in return for what they actually give us. It is not quite money but it is something that has a financial string attached. And they very much want to see us achieving some sort of standards and I suppose accreditation is a nice easy set of standards where they can go, 'well if you are achieving it you are obviously achieving recognised standards'. So there is that element. But on a personal side I am a huge supporter of it for museums. Because I think it does give a good basis for best practice. I understand that I come from a background where, because of my MA in Museum Studies and different experience; it is kind of easier for me to understand where are Arts Council England are coming from on things. Whereas somebody who is say in an entirely volunteer-led museum who may not have a museum adviser on hand, that process can possibly be rather daunting. And even just to look at the application form can be incredibly daunting. I am hoping as they are doing the review, they do simplify the form. But actually it was really useful as an exercise for us. It made us learn different things. When they are asking the questions of 'what do you do to do this?' particularly when it came to the section 3, section 3 is very much about visitor experience and they were very much about how do you consult with your non-users. And we are going: 'very limited'... but actually sometimes it is really nice to know; 'well you are kind of looking at us doing that, and we have never thought to do that', and then I said about it to other museums, and they have said 'well we have never thought to do that'. And as I said about the National Army Museum, when all of us military museums said 'we have never done this, what do you guys know about it as a national?' and they go 'ah you're supposed to be doing that, we will send over a trainer, don't you worry we'll get this sorted'. [00:51:34] So it raised that awareness, then we could go back to that network, that network gave central support, so things to become achievable. So I just think it's really nice to show that you are achieving your standards. And maybe it is coming from that traditional Museum background of the MA in Museum studies. I think it's good in defining yourself as a museum to then show you are achieving recognised standards in care.

As I mentioned earlier I'm not always entirely - sometimes things are called museums that people may not always, that I may not always think is a museum; particularly when you see something that describes itself as a museum and they are selling all their collection on eBay because they got bored of it and it's a private collection really. And then all my friends go 'is that what you do when you get bored, you just put it on eBay' and I'm like 'no we've really can't do that'. And I think even if you're not accredited, I sometimes think using their guidelines and standards to help you get best practice in your organisation can be really helpful because I work as a museum mentor for a museum going through accreditation and I just sometimes think of it as helpful guidelines; don't get too hung up on the detail, just go with it as helpful guidelines and start thinking about how you can make it work for

you in what you currently do. Thinking about how you can make it work for you in what you currently do don't adjust all your operations just to suit them. Just use the guidelines then slowly bring it forward; people always know it's a learning curve and sometimes I think it's nice just to see those sort of guidelines and even if a museum wasn't even looking for accreditation they can go with, 'oh those are the guidelines for accreditation we should be hitting; oh we are doing most of those, even though we're not interested in going for accreditation, we can see that we are doing pretty well as a benchmark against it'.

[00:53:35]

TB: Organisationally are you a charity or are you part of the Regiment, how does it work do you have trustees?

MM: And we are the Rifles regimental Museum trust and it's a CIO which is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

TB: And was that established in 2007 when the regiment started?

MM: No, earlier this year actually, the start of this year.

TB: That's interesting why did you decide to go for trust status?

MM: So there was the Rifles Regimental Trust which has been formed since 2007 I believe. And obviously the museum originally came under them. As a branch of them. And when we were going for accreditation we went backwards and forwards over the idea of having our own Museum Trust and board of trustees. And actually the accreditation made us think about where do we see ourselves in the future, you know, if the RHQ was to move away from here would we as a museum move away from here? Probably not. So even though it was convenient at the time, is it the right way for the future? We took the decision which was slightly harder to actually go with, we will become our own charity and start working towards that, being resilient and sustainable in our own right.

[00:55:01]

TB: So it was the question of independence really

MM: Yes

TB: Does it also come down to the fact that if there was another reorganisation you could still exist in the same way that those other regimental museums have before

MM: Absolutely I think also it was, so obviously we are funded by the regimental trust which is the regiment essentially, they do fund for our museum to exist; and I think it was nice to separate that out because I think it encourages the museum not to become reliant on the regiment; the more we push to do our own thing the less we need to ask them to support, which in some respects means but by the time we do something really big, maybe we can go back and ask them to support us or maybe we're going, 'no we're completely alright in our own right, don't worry about us, thanks guys'.

TB: yes, I was going to ask about funding is that the one and only income stream that you have, from the Regiment

MM: From that, and then the MOD pay grant-in-aid towards salaries.

TB: ok great and what was the budget roughly for the set-up back in 2012-13 just a ballpark figure

MM: Gosh it is more or less the same as a yearly budget first few years of that was spent so the first ever budget that we got given was 24,000 I believe. And that was from the Regimental Trust. That very much went on setting up. I believe the next year was 22 to 23,000. and that more or less went on the same. I think it was only about 2015 where we stopped spending solely on that and started looking at doing other activities as well. Out of that budget.

TB: I see that's brilliant thank you so much.

Ends