

Royal Small Arms Factory

Roll of Honour Project



Exhibition dates: September 2018 – February 2019

On Tuesday 25 September 2018 a small exhibition commemorating the work of the men and women who worked at the Royal Small Arms Factory (RSAF) at Enfield during the First World War will be unveiled at The Museum of Enfield in the Dugdale Centre, Enfield.

At its peak the RSAF employed over 9,500 workers and made over 2 million rifles for British and Commonwealth forces during the conflict. It also manufactured and repaired bayonets, swords, lances and even some machine guns. But unfortunately very little information has survived about the men and women who worked at the factory.

The organisers hope that the exhibition will encourage members of the public, including former members of staff of the RSAF, to come forward to help fill gaps in the historical record. Two family history events will be organised where people can come along and find out more about the project, and bring any memorabilia relating to the RSAF which they would be willing to have recorded.

The exhibition is part of a larger project to commemorate the work of the RSAF during the two world wars. It is funded by the National Lottery through a £9,800 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the RSA Trust. Partners include the Royal Armouries Museum, Enfield Local Studies and Archives, the Museum of Enfield, the RSAF Apprentices Association and the RSA Trust.

The project will undertake the following:

- The unveiling of two commemorative plaques at the former site of the factory now Enfield Island Village;
- The conservation of photographs taken of the staff of the factory in December 1918 and January 1919;

- The transcription of staff registers containing some 1500 names of men who worked at the factory during the First World War;
- The identification of other men and women who worked at the factory during 1914 to 1919;
- The creation of a Roll of Honour of staff who fell in the service of their country and the creation of a Roll of Honour of staff who worked at the factory
- The collection of oral histories of surviving staff members.

Members of the public will have volunteering opportunities to help transcribe and research the staff register. There will also be educational opportunities for local schools researching local history as part of Key Stage 2 and 3.

Commenting on the project:

John Clark, Local Studies Officer, Enfield Local Studies and Archives, said:

"The RSAF was an important and major employer in Enfield and did much to shape the history of the area. The contribution of its workers during both world Wars is long overdue for some recognition".

Stacey Anne Bagdi, Museum Officer and Curator,

Ray Tuthill, President and Heritage Officer of the Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield Apprentices Association, said:

"RSAF was one of Britain's three original Royal Ordnance Factories (along with the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich and the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills) which formed the nucleus of the country's arms industry during both World Wars. In the days when RSAF was open publicity was not encouraged, and it is only rather belatedly that some attempts have been made to record the vital role the factory played in supplying our armed forces with weapons during both wars and in training staff to set up other Royal Ordnance Factories around the country during the wars. The crucial contributions made by RSAF's workforce to the war effort have not received the recognition accorded to some others and the WW1 centenary offers an appropriate occasion to try to rectify that omission whilst living memories of the factory still survive."

Philip Abbott, Archives and Records Manager, Royal Armouries, said:

“We know a great deal of the history of the RSAF from surviving records, but very little about the people who worked there. We hope that this project will bring to the fore the stories of the ordinary men and women who played such an important role not just in the two world wars but the history of the factory in general”.

Visiting the Museum of Enfield

The Museum is open every day of the week from 10am-6pm. For more information on the museum including their collections please visit their website:

<https://www.dugdalecentre.co.uk/page/museum/>

Visiting the Enfield Local Studies and Archive Centre

The archive centre is open to the public from Tuesdays – Thursdays. For more information please visit their website: <https://www.dugdalecentre.co.uk/page/local-studies-library-and-archive/>

About the Project

Further enquiries to: Katie Canning, Communications Officer. Email: katie.canning@armouries.org.uk, telephone: 0113 220 1978

About Royal Armouries

Entry to the museum is free but some activities carry a small charge.

- Royal Armouries has sites in Leeds, HM Tower of London and Fort Nelson in Hampshire.
- The Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds houses a major part of the national collection of arms and armour, and displays over 8,500 objects throughout its five themed galleries.
- Open all year daily, 10am-5pm. Closed 24-26 December
- Website: www.royalarmouries.org
- The Royal Armouries Museum should not be confused with Royal Armouries International plc, the private sector corporate hospitality business based on the same site in Leeds.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

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