

Museum Report:



Figure 1: The Royal Welsh Museum (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2021)

The Royal Welsh Museum

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Introduction

The Royal Welsh Museum opened in 1935 in Brecon and houses artifacts in relation to The Royal Welsh Regiment formed in 2006 and its predecessors, The South Wales Borderers (the 24th), The Royal Welsh Fusiliers (23rd), The Welch Regiment (the 41st), The South Lincolnshire (the 69th), The Monmouthshire Regiment and The Royal Regiment of Wales (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2019 a and The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 a). Figure 2 illustrates how The Royal Welsh Regiment originated from these earlier regiments.

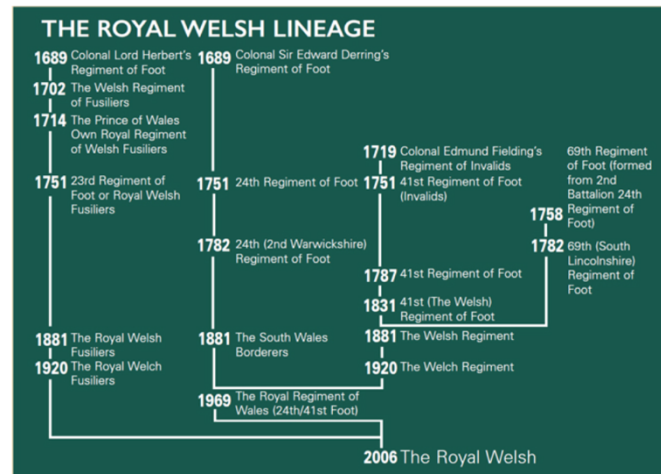


Figure 2: The Royal Welsh Lineage timeline (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 b)

The collection at the museum consists of over 33,000 objects including, but not limited to, uniforms, medals, weapons, models, artworks and letters and a large selection of these are on display at one time (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 c). At the Museum, there are five main galleries focusing on the First World War, Second World War, Anglo-Zulu War along with a medal room and an armoury (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 d). As of 2025, the museum has two websites which can be confusing as one appears to be older, having not been updated since 2019 as seen in the latest news, opening times sections on the home page all dating to 2019 and the 'On this day in history' dating to April despite, the time of viewing being December, see figures 3,4 and 5 (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2019 a). The newer webpage was designed by Neil Mansfield and is simpler to navigate with the menu along the top of the page and information is laid out clearly (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 d). For the purposes of this report, the focus will be on the current webpage however some comparison will be drawn with the older webpage.

The areas this report will focus on are the museum's engagement with Welsh Culture including the Welsh language, authenticity focusing mainly on virtual visitors and the responsibilities of the museum as a military museum.



Figure 3: Latest News (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2019 b)



Figure 5: On this day in history (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2019 d)



Figure 4: Opening Times (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2019 c)

How Does The Royal Welsh Museum Engage in Welsh Culture?

The idea of Welsh culture and being Welsh is complex and has no singular defining factor (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2014 pp.3). It has been suggested that common themes are central to the Welsh identity such as endurance, collective spirit and self- sacrifice, all of which appear within the museum (Dicks, 2020 pp.68). The collection at the museum consists of artifacts dating to the 1700's, from the antecedent units that eventually became The Royal Welsh, highlighting the endurance of the Welsh Military throughout the last four hundred years (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 e, The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 d). Despite being a museum dedicated to Welsh Heritage, there is a distinct lack of the Welsh language on their current website. The museum's old website has little Welsh but on the home page it has the Welsh for the museum name "Amgueddfa Gatrodol y Cymry Brenhinol (Aberhonddu)" and The Royal Welsh motto "Gwell Angau na Chywilydd - Better Death than Dishonour" (The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum, 2019 a). The Welsh Government believes that the use of the Welsh language is essential to cultural heritage and there is a link between improved wellbeing and the use of minority languages such as Welsh in cultural settings (Henderson and Edwards, 2019 Prys and Matthews, 2023). However, the use of the Welsh language does not directly correlate to the idea of being Welsh as can be seen in figure 6 as 76% of people living in Wales identify as being Welsh but as of the 2021 census only 17.8% of the population speaks Welsh (Welsh Language Commissioner, 2025).

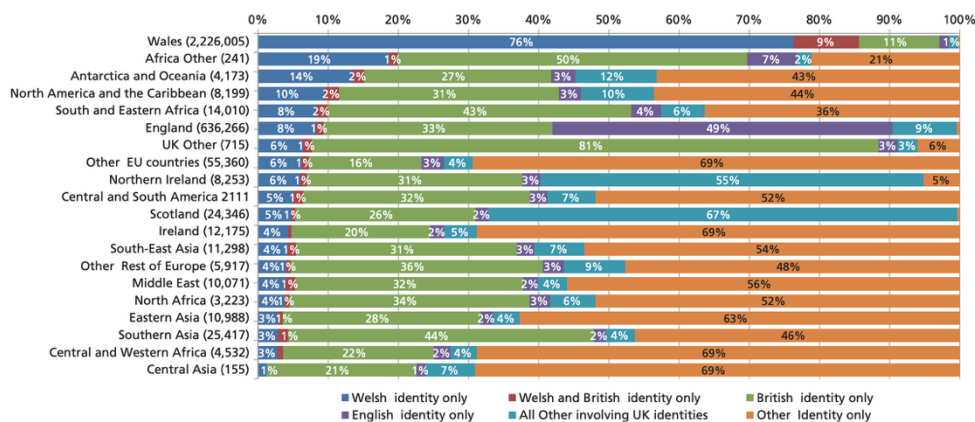


Figure 6: Chart showing relationship between National identity and ethnic group, Wales, 2011 census (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2014).

The museum's current website has little focus on the regiment's links to Wales and Welsh culture despite being centred on the stories of Welsh soldiers of The Royal Welsh and its predecessors. The earlier website provided some links by using a little Welsh. Strengthening the connection to the notion of what it means to be Welsh is something that the museum may wish to consider in the future as the link between heritage spaces and survival of culture should not be understated (Henderson and Edwards, 2019 Prys and Matthews, 2023).

Authenticity in a Virtual World.

Authenticity is a complex idea and has no definitive definition within the museum space but visitors viewing the museum as authentic and ensuring an authentic experience are at the core of museums (Komarac, Dosen and Zabkar, 2024, Jin, Xiao and Shen 2020). Three elements within a museum that can be seen to possess authenticity are the museum itself, the visitor to the museum and the materials within the museum (Komarac, Dosen and Zabkar, 2024). The Royal Welsh Museum is situated within the Brecon Military Barracks which is the main Army headquarters in Wales and has been in use for over 200 years, this adds to the perceived authenticity of the museum as there is a physical connection with the military history it showcases (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 f, BBC News, 2021). Visitors are not just the physical visitors to the museum but also those who visit the website and those visitors who do both (Zhang and Chen, 2025). Virtual museum access is vital as it increases the accessibility of knowledge stored within the museum. Factors that affect the ability to access the physical museum include social status, costs and distance (Evrard and Krebs, 2018).

One way The Royal Welsh Museum is planning on engaging visitors both in person and online is joining the Bloomberg Connects app see figure 7 (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 f). Bloomberg Connects aims to connect people to cultural heritage through technology with the aim of accessibility, they have partnered with 1250 cultural spaces including museums creating free digital guides (Bloomberg Connects, 2025). The museum houses over 33,000 artifacts with a very small proportion of these being accessible online. This limits the ability to evaluate the collection in its entirety (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 c). Despite the small number of artifacts online, there is a lot of information provided, this can be seen with the X-ray Plate of Sgt Davies (Figure 8). The information tells the story of his military service in World War I. Incorporating the story behind the x-ray plate allows for local and regional stories, adding to the perceived authenticity of the artifact and highlights a shift away from the traditional way museums view worthiness of display becoming less intrinsically linked to monetary value (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 g, Jin and Xiao and Shen, 2020, Zhang and Chen, 2025). Experiencing the museum virtually alters the perceived authenticity because of limitations in access to the collection compared to an in person visit, although there are attempts to expand accessibility to the museum.

! Tours

Gain insight into some of our stories told by our Curator. Tours must be booked in advance and are subject to availability. Our Curator Tours are just £2 per person (minimum £20).

Coming Soon

Prefer to go at your own pace? Our new self-led tours powered by the Bloomberg Connects app are launching soon!

Figure 7: Tours (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 g)



Figure 8: X-Ray Plates 11450 Sgt Edward Davies MM (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 g)

Responsibilities of a Military Museum

The Royal Welsh Museum is run by the charity, The Royal Welsh Regimental Museum Trust whose objectives are seen in figure 9. From the objectives, it is evident that there is a focus on the accomplishments of the regiment (The Charity Commission England and Wales, 2026 a). One

example being the British defence at Rorke's Drift, which was a source of national pride after the disaster at iSandlwana, and immortalised in the film Zulu (Lieven, 1998). The museum through its archive attempts to tell the

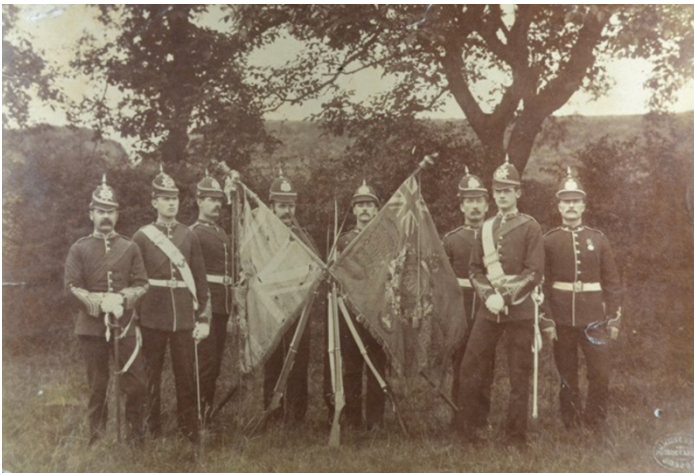


Figure 10: Photograph of the Colour Party of the 24th Regiment (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2026 a)

Charitable objects

1. TO EDUCATE AND ENHANCE THE APPRECIATION OF THE PUBLIC IN THE HISTORY AND MILITARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REGIMENT AND ITS FORMER AND SUCCESSOR REGIMENTS AND IN PARTICULAR BY THE MAINTENANCE OF A MILITARY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE AND THE PRESERVATION AND EXHIBITION TO THE PUBLIC OF THE PROPERTY AND ASSETS OF THE COLLECTION. 2. TO MANAGE THE CHATTELS AND MAKE THEM AVAILABLE TO THE REGIMENT FOR REGIMENTAL PURPOSES IN ORDER TO PROMOTE MILITARY EFFICIENCY. 3. TO PROMOTE MILITARY EFFICIENCY AND ENCOURAGE RECRUITMENT.

Figure 9: Charity objectives (The Charity Commission England and Wales, 2026 a)

factual story, however, the Anglo - Zulu war is not currently part of their virtual exhibits and there are few artefacts on the online collection (The Royal Welsh Museum 2025 e). For most of these artefacts, the information given does not present a narrative however the photograph of the regiment with the Queen's colours (figure 10) presents the contemporary national perspective of the events surrounding the deaths of Meville and Coghill excluding contradicting accounts of their roles at the Battle of iSandlwana (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2026 a, Lieven, 1998).

The charity does not own or rent any land or property therefore suggesting that the military are allowing them the use of the barracks (The Charity Commission for England and Wales, 2026 b). Furhmann and Mannitz (2025) discuss the power dynamic and responsibility to do justice to perpetrators and victims of conflicts. In the case of the Royal Welsh Museum, does their objective of recruitment to the regiment and the reliance on the army for their premises impact their ability to challenge established narratives? (The Charity Commission for England and Wales, 2026 a).

Military museums are an important element of remembrance and since the 1920's the British people have viewed remembrance as an ethical obligation to the war dead (Fox, 2014). The museum places a significant emphasis on the service of regiment personnel, and this makes up a large proportion of their collection that is currently visible online including war medals (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2025 a). Their support of the 'NEVER FORGET YOUR WELSH HEROS' project illustrates the significance they place on remembrance (The Royal Welsh Museum, 2026 b). Fox (2014) poses the question of balancing honouring the dead and the endorsement of conflict.

Conclusion

The Royal Welsh Museum celebrates the history of The Royal Welsh and its antecedent units but does not actively engage with Welsh culture. Their website offers a limited view into their collection, nevertheless they are viewed as having authority and providing authentic experiences. The museum shows initiative in adapting to an increasingly virtual world. The role that the museum plays as a military museum (which is still affiliated with the British Army) calls into question the biases in the presentation of narratives. The limitation of access online is something for the museum to address along with representing both sides of the narrative. The museum has the potential to be an essential online resource on The Royal Welsh.

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