

Grumpy Old Men's Club update

A group of eight Grumpies visited the National Army Museum which was reopened by the Queen in March following its £24m revamp which took three years to complete.

Our first order of business was a visit to the excellent café for a coffee and where we lived up to our name and had an enjoyable grumble before setting off to explore the museum. As luck would have it our timing was such that we were able to take advantage of an introductory guided tour. The tour did not venture into any of the galleries, rather it was designed to tell us about the theme of each gallery and to highlight anything we should look out for. After the tour, we went our separate ways for a couple of hours so that we could investigate in greater detail whatever interested us. An arrangement to rendezvous in the café for lunch was agreed!



The museum has four permanent galleries each looking at a different aspect of the army:

“Soldier” – here you could find out what it was like to be a soldier. From joining up to coming home, you explore soldiers’ experiences from their own recollections and often surprisingly personal objects. The stories were told from the different perspectives of soldiers through the ages but whether from those who served in the two World Wars or a modern day soldier the life of a soldier was surprisingly similar.



“Army” – this gallery explored the origins of the army in the chaos of the British Civil Wars, its major role in the political development of the country and its impact on global history. Some of the facts displayed in this gallery were truly startling, others just plain frightening.



Year	Size of army	Event
1815	250,000	end of the Napoleonic Wars
1945	3,120,000	end of the Second World War
1960	350,000	Cold War
1990	153,000	end of the Cold War
2010	101,000	War on Terror
2020	82,000	Government target !!

“Battle” – illustrates how the British Army fulfils its most challenging task, fighting battles, from the 17th century to the present day. What is highlighted is how technology has radically changed warfare. From the early days of hand to hand fighting, through trench warfare to modern day drones.



“Society” – brings together objects and stories that tell us about our relationship with the British Army. It explores the army as a cultural and military force that impacts on our customs, technologies and values.



The museum also has a large temporary exhibition space which is currently housing an exhibition entitled "War Paint: Brushes with conflict" where you can explore why artists and soldiers have painted scenes of conflict.

This is a museum that deserves repeat visits, there is so much to see it is not possible to do it justice in a few short hours.