



Surrey Infantry Museum

Museum Newsletter – Nov 2020

Volume 1 Issue 19

AIM

To maintain knowledge within the County of Surrey's Infantry
Regiments from 1661 to the present Day

FOSIM – Tony Ward

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Surrey Infantry Museum

Surrey History Centre,
130 Goldsworth Road,
Woking, Surrey
GU21 6ND

Tel: 01483 770761

email:

fosim@btconnect.com

FOSIM NEWSLETTER NOV 2020

I write this introduction, just as we have been told due to the steep rise in COVID Cases that we have to be “Banged Up” for a month. (Last time I was Banged up was in 1957 in Kingston Depot Guard Room when Sergeant Paddy Hannigan found I had deserted my Sentry Post (It was snowing!).

I trust you are all well and staying safe, remember if any of you need benevolent assistance to contact your nearest ssafa Branch who will contact the Regiment.

If you are thinking of which books to read during this “Lock Down”, I strongly recommend Colonel Patrick Crowley’s latest: “ Infantry Die Hards”. Elsewhere in this Newsletter is a flyer telling you how to order. Yes, it is not cheap, but it is 450 pages – more a “Barn Door Stopper than a Doorstopper”. It covers the story of the Regiment from Tangier to present day including Kirke’s lambs, China, Sobraon, Afghanistan, The Somme, Salerno and Northern Ireland and much, much more.

Another idea is to spend some time digging down the Queen’s Royal Surrey Regimental website: <http://www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk/index.shtml> . Last year the site had 33,000 visitors. During, this 75th Anniversary of end of WW2 listen to the stories at Veterans voices telling of: Life as a POW in Japan and Poland, Dunkirk, North Africa and Italy. There are well over 6,000 pages of Regimental history. Credit and our thanks must go to Lindsay Parsons who has done so much to make the site easier to use and updated many sections.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID we had to cancel most of our activities this year:

Friends of Surrey Infantry Museum: Dee Hutchison had arranged an interesting series of talks. As soon as we are allowed to gather again, we will re-arrange.

Our Battlefield Tour: We initially put back until October and now we are hoping to go over to France and Belgium 11-14th May 21 – fingers crossed.

Our Re Union at the Union Jack Club also had to be cancelled at the instruction of the club. It is our hope that once we can gather together again to hold a really large summer reunion at 4 PWRR Drill Hall in Redhill. All will be welcome: Queen's Royal Regiment, East Surrey's, Queen's Surrey's, Queen's and PWRR. Watch this space!

Our successor Regiment is very busy and virtually 100% recruited. 1 PWRR are stationed in Cyprus and due to be posted to Greenwich in 2021, 2 PWRR a Special Infantry Battalion are in Aldershot with Teams deployed constantly overseas. 3 and 4 PWRR, the Reserve Battalions have been putting swabs down the public's throats at COVID testing stations in our Regimental Area. The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Combined Charities continue to support the Regiment. At our October meeting £12,000 was passed to battalions mainly for the purchase of Sports equipment and another £5,000 towards having the large portrait of Catherine of Braganza cleaned.

As I write this, I am having a stream of emails making changes to the Remembrance Day Services. I and RSM Harrison of 4 PWRR were due to lay wreaths in the Queen's Surrey Chapel at Guildford Cathedral remembering the 17,410 Queen's men and East Surreys killed in two World Wars. Colonel Patrick Crowley was to be at Holy Trinity, Guildford. I recently went over to All Saints, in Kingston upon Thames and was very pleased to note that The East Surrey Regimental Chapel is in near constant use. Don't forget that all the Chapels are available for those with a Regimental connection to use for Christenings, Weddings and Last Parades. When you approach the clergy tell them of your Regimental connection.

At the end of September, we said farewell to Stephen Johnson on his retirement, Steve took over as curator at Clandon some 4 months before the fire. Following the disaster, he worked diligently overseeing the salvage operation, putting together a most complicated insurance claim and establishing displays at Guildford Museum. Talk about having the right person in the right post at the right time. Steve's commitment and methodical efforts have enabled us to have hope to establish displays telling of our history in future years. We still hope to have a section in Guildford Museum on a permanent basis but we will have to see in the aftermath of COVID if the finances of the National Lottery to be able to fund Guildford Museum to re-furbish the space. They still want us. Thank you, Steve, for being such a loyal and dedicated manager. I know Steve would also want me to thank all the Volunteers who have put in many hours helping to sort things out.

Let us hope in the Spring Newsletter that we can give some firm dates for our Reunions. Our thanks to Dee Hutchison for putting this Newsletter together.

In the meantime: Hands, Mask and Space.

Do at this uncertain time maintain contact with your regimental comrades. A telephone call or an email can mean so much.

Please stay safe and Gill and I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and hope for 2021.

Tony Ward

David Pollard - MUSEUM MANAGEMENT and TRUSTEES

Trustee Update

When I wrote my last update in April we had just started lockdown, and here we are again in a second lockdown! Despite that, I hope this edition of the newsletter finds you well. The last meeting of the Museum Trustees in April was a virtual one, and the next meeting on 27th November will again be virtual.

The PWRR Museum Trust 2019 Accounts and Report were finalised earlier and are now available on the Charity Commission website at this link <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/> click on “Find A Charity”, enter the charity number 277008 and that will lead you to the report. The Trust remains in a strong financial position, largely due to the insurance payout from Ecclesiastical Insurance and also the endowment given to the Trust by the Queen’s Royal Surreys Trustees when the museums amalgamated in 2010.

At Dover Castle, work had to cease during lockdown when the castle was closed. When the castle eventually reopened, work to engage with schools and the public continued much as before. At SIM, Stephen Johnson retired on 30th September, having delayed his departure in order to see the uninsured and insured losses claims to a point where they were largely completed. As I advised in the last newsletter, the claims were submitted to the National Trust’s lawyers in February, and apart from some initial questions which were answered, our lawyers have heard no more. The aim is to resolve the claims by way of mediation and the NT and their lawyers have agreed to that.

When I last spoke to Ecclesiastical Insurance in June, they were anticipating face-to-face mediation in probably this December or January 2021, but given the latest lockdown this would seem to be unlikely. In a complex claim such as this Ecclesiastical and our lawyers feel face-to-face rather than virtual mediation is necessary, but clearly Covid is currently a block on that.

Before Stephen Johnson left, Tony Ward arranged for a charming print to be framed, with an inscription stating it was presented to Stephen on behalf of his friends and colleagues at SIM. I presented that to Stephen in the SIM Office at Surrey History Centre (now once again closed until further notice) in the presence of a number of volunteers - unfortunately Tony Ward was absent as he had escaped to Wales for a short break! In addition, Col Patrick Crowley, Deputy Colonel (Heritage), wrote to Stephen and enclosed an inscribed copy of his latest book, and the Col of the Regt, Lt Gen Chalmers, also wrote to Stephen. An advertisement for the SIM manager’s job was placed by RHQ some weeks ago, for 3 days a week on a fixed 18 month contract. Interviews for the post are due to take place on 25th November.

Guildford Museum eventually reopened after lockdown and after the structural works were completed, and SIM then installed a VE/VJ day exhibit. Unfortunately Guildford Museum is also again closed during lockdown. As I reported in the last newsletter, the HLF cancelled all current bids for funds in March and that included the bid from Guildford Council for the proposed extension to Guildford Museum. Originally bidders were told it would be 6 months before they could reapply, but we have so far not been able to ascertain what plans Guildford Council have regarding their application.

Once again, I would like to pay a sincere and heartfelt tribute to our volunteers, for their stalwart service to the museum, without which we would not have a museum; for that I am most grateful as are the other Trustees of the PWRR Museum Trust. Finally, I wish all of you a Happy Christmas and let us hope that 2021 is better than 2020. David Pollard

2020 QRS and East Surrey Reunions

As you are aware we have been a year of cancellation on these Events. However, once we know things are cleared for gatherings to go ahead then we will resume normal play. Thank you all for your kind words as it has been very difficult for us to plan ahead until we know what is happening.

All QRS matters are to be sent to Dee Hutchison using the email: fosim@btconnect.com

Books and Other Media

'Infantry Die Hards' by Col (Retd) Patrick Crowley

Attached to this email is details on Colonel (Retired) P T Crowley's new book 'Infantry Die Hards'. All proceeds will be going to the Regiments Benevolent Fund. Please note the book can be purchased for £30.00 from Mr Henry Thomas MBE, PWRR Area HQ, Leros Barracks, Sturry Road, , Kent, CT1 1HR

You can also hear Patrick discuss his book on the link I have included below. Please note you have to click on the right hand side where there is a picture of the front cover to get through to the Interview itself.

<https://www.guildford-dragon.com/>

'Hell in my Head' By Maj (Retd) John Bennett

This deeply moving book chronicles the emotional and physical effects of military conflict on a Kentish family. The family members whose lives are recounted include an aspiring footballer whose life gradually disintegrates and a farm labourer who might have won a Victoria Cross if proper credit for his heroism had been given. They also include a young woman who pulled an injured and dying crew from a fully laden and burning bomber. 'Hell in my Head' is especially relevant in today's world, where heroism is not only still necessary in the armed forces, but also in daily life in the emergency services on our streets. The world needs an unforgettable reminder of the real price of conflict. 'Hell in my Head' tells the story of these brave individuals.

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Hell-Head-following-military-conflict/dp/1913567311/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

Museum Update by Dee Hutchison



As previously stated by Tony we said goodbye to our Curator Stephen Johnson at the end of September as he finally went into retirement. His retirement plans were postponed slightly due to the Covid situation. We were able to do a Covid 19 Lunch and say our goodbyes to Stephen with presentation of gifts and words of thanks. It is not the sendoff we wanted for all the work that Stephen has done since he joined us. We all wish him a Happy Retirement. There is now recruitment out for the post of Collections officer and hopefully be able to announce the new person in the New Year.

Maj (Retd) David Pollard with Steve Johnson and his presentation

In the meantime Ian Chatfield and Stephen Blanchard continue to update the Medals Collection get it all photographed and update the IT System with all the information required. We are also looking at other items that have been returned from Farcroft and what can be done with them.

Other Volunteers have been assigned cataloguing and recording of Photographs and Paper documents we have received. We have a six month backlog of work to be done and just as we started to make a big dent then we are back in lockdown! However the SIM office remains open to staff but the SHC closed to the public. (see below)

Recent donation have included the following:

The pendant was sent in by Robin Newing it is about the size of an old penny- on the reverse of the locket is an inscription to 'Charlie' Delville Wood and dated 1st September 1916. So off went the research and the SHC found the following:-

2nd Lieutenant Charles John Griffin was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant into 9th Battalion The Queen's, 27 Mar 1915. He was attached to 2nd Battalion and served in France and Flanders, Jul 1915-Sep 1916, as machine gun officer. He was killed in action at Delville Wood, 1 Sep 1916 and is commemorated on Thiepval Memorial, France. He joined the 2nd Battalion, The Queen's, on 23 August and was killed in action on 1 September 1916.





This is a 2 foot square cushion and has spent a few days in the freezer to ensure any bugs have been destroyed before it was allowed back in the SIM Offices. This is thought to be a convalescent piece and we are now trying to date it.

In the bottom banner it has reads at the 1st and 2nd Battalion East Surrey Regiment. The last Battle Honour on it reads as Suakin 1885. Any one any ideas please let us know.

Out and about

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

For those who would like something to do in these difficult time then I thought I would let you know about the Eyes On Hands On Project where they are recruiting for Volunteers for help them.

About the Project

The **Eyes On, Hands On project** allows volunteers across the country to reconnect with this history and heritage on their doorstep and help CWGC to ensure these war graves - scattered across more than 12,500 locations - are clean and well-tended.

There are many single or small cluster of war graves and they are inspected officially every 2- 5 years however it has been decide that this need to be done more frequently. They have decide to recruit a band of volunteers who can help here.

So what do I do ? Look on the Commonwealth War Graves for Local Cemeteries Church cemeteries near you and decide whether you can take this on. Visits expected to be six monthly. Read more at this link - Yes and your truly is doing this!!

[Eyes On, Hands On | CWGC](#)

Out and about – Editor

Over the last couple of weeks we have been asked to do a couple of research areas for two of our Lt Cols by descendants of their families. The first one is Lt Col Beauchamp (said as Beecham)Tyndall Pell.



He arrived in the 1st Battalion QRWS on the 3rd October 1914 taking over from the recently killed Lt Col Warren. He was heavily involved in the First Battle of Ypres. 31st October is well known as being the worst day for the Battalion in the Battle of Ghuelveldt. An attack was made on the B and C Companies Lines by the German Forces and the German succeeded in getting through the Lines. Lt Col Pell ordered a counterattack by the Kings Royal Rifles but this failed. Lt Col Pell was injured and was tried to be recovered back but he fell into German hands. He subsequently died of his wounds on 4th November 1914.

He is buried at Zantvoorde British Cemetery and we visited here on our 1st Battlefield Tour in 2014. However this request rattled a memory mainly because of the name. Two years ago an observation by FOSIM member Chris Boxall spotted this box at Rinella Fort in Malta in one of the display Rooms. The following year I was in Malta and paid a visit to the Fort and did ask if we could have it back but no can do!!!! But they would allow me to take photographs up close.



The second request was from Robert de Gavre who is the younger son of Lt Col Robert Oliver Vere Thompson. Lt Col Thompson joined the 1/6th East Surrey Regiment from the Royal Sussex in April 1943. The Battalion arrived in Naples on 21 Feb 1944 and they moved up to the River Rapido (Gari). The 1/6th were selected to lead the Brigade over the River. On researching we found that Lt Col Thompson was writing a Regimental Newsletter for those who had been injured and were in hospital in Italy and he describes the crossing in detail.

The Regiment opened the Campaign by crossing the RAPIDO River at 2345 hrs on the night of the 11th May 1944. "A" Coy right "D" Coy left. "A" Coy were in fact the right hand Coy of the 8th Army. The crossing was carried out under extremely difficulties of fog and swift currents. Few boats went back to the home bank and had it not been for the Flying Assault Ferries created by "C" Coy we might still be on the wrong side of the River. "A" Coy managed to get several small parties onto Hill "35" but were not strong enough to capture it. So Major Byrne and Newton collected a mixed few and assaulted this hill with complete success. We found 14 enemy set up on this position which was a natural fortress honeycombed with cave, etc. "B" Coy who did not do so well were rather isolated and were called back to a position covering Hill "D" Coy were unfortunate to hit an unlocated minefield.



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Then followed 3 or 4 days of grim hanging on to what we had captured. We were shelled and mortared continuously and it seemed ages before bridges were built and tanks and more troops got across. This period really won the Battle. Everything was hanging on us (the right) as, if we had broken, the major plan would have collapsed. But we held, and the rest of the Div and an Indian Army Div on their left, plus large number of tanks speedily advanced on our left to cut Route 6 and prevent the German crossing from CASSINO. During these days we got across our Mortars, Pioneers, A/Tanks, R.E.Cs to help us hold on. As the Battle moved forward so did we, and on the night of the 17th May 1944 we were sitting over CASSINO. Next morning at 0630 hrs we got orders to advance into CASSINO as quickly as possible. ("A" Coy left "B" Coy right, supported by "C" Coy and the Carrier Platoon). We crossed the railway at 0900 hrs and entered CASSINO by the AMPHITHEATRE and Roman Palaces a few minutes later.



1/6th Entering Cassino. It is thought that the Officer leaning out of the Jeep is Lt Col Thompson watching his men entering Cassino.

Sadly Lt Col Thompson was killed on 7th June 1944 with others when his jeep was blown up by a landmine near St Angelo Romano. He has been awarded the DSO for his incredible bravery and actions between 11th and 18th May with the Battalion. His DSO states

During the assault crossing nearly all the assault boats were sunk or carried away by the current, but Lt Col Thompson by his drive, encouragement and personal courage ensured the construction of 2 flying ferries, without which neither the rest of the Battalion nor the follow up Battalion could have crossed the River. During the vital 12th May, his Battalion hung onto to it objective despite the most determined enemy efforts to dislodge them and drive them back into the River. On 17th and 28th May his Battalion advanced with great dash and speed and finally cleared CASSINO of the remnants of the enemy.

With permission from Robert here is an extract written by Brigadier Shoosmith on 12 June 1944 to Robert's mother - who we are informed is still alive at 103 years old.

'His loss is an irreparable tragedy to his regiment and to me. He had gone forward most gallantly as usual, to see what he could do to help the men in a vehicle which had just gone up on a mine. On his way up the road his own vehicle struck a mine. I can assure you his death was instantaneous and that your husband could not have possibly known a second pain on death.'

Further on in the letter - He was worshipped by his officers and men who would literally did go through hell for him. I have personally lost a most able and gallant officer and a most true friend.'

The writing of the Regimental Newsletter continued after his death and we have copies of these in the archives.

Lunch Club

As you are aware all Events have been canceled until further Notice.
Still on our speaking Schedule is: -

Sir Nick Young
Lt Col (Retd) Peter Swanson
Col (Retd) Piers Storie-Pugh OBE

Sir Nick Young - ex CEO of the British Red Cross
Escaping with his Life - The story of Maj L Young and his
Exploits in WW2 -Ticket only event.

£12.50