



Surrey Infantry Museum

Museum Newsletter – Mar 2024

Volume1 Final Issue

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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Only manned on a
Tuesday from 4th April

FOSIM NEWSLETTER Mar 2024

I fear that I have some sad news. Although I personally have not been officially told by anyone in RHQ, Dee Hutchison has informed me that the office and all the contents are to be moved to Dover on 18th and 19th March. Whilst I understand that the chance of finding a replacement location for our Museum is unlikely and even if a suitable location was identified the finances could well be insufficient to cover setting up and running costs. But the suddenness of the decision has come as a bit of a shock.

I am hopeful that the Museum Trustees will continue to agree to look after our displays within Guildford Museum, Lightbox Woking and the Medal Cabinet at Surrey History Centre together with keeping the office at SHC open for research and answering queries. Likewise, I hope with the considerable funds from both the un-insured and insured losses together with the residue of the £305,000 endowment passed by The Queen's Royal Surrey Regimental Association in 2011 that the History and Heritage of the Surreys Regiments (including The Queen's and PWRR) will continue to be displayed within the County. Friends of Surrey Infantry Museum was conceived to raise funds for a Surrey Infantry Museum. Initially there were 250 members who signed up paying £10 annually. Obviously that number has dropped with many having attended their last parade! We aimed to provide a focal point for talks, provide a Newsletter twice a year and organise battlefield Tours. Dee Hutchison has been the driving force and done a superb job. We have had talks on: Salerno, Kut, POW's, the Russian Campaign 1919, The Chindits, two talks by that well known author John Lewis-Stempel, and by Sir Nick Young and many more. She has organised five Battlefield Tours covering the Surrey Regiments actions during WW1, Dunkirk 1940 and Italy 43-44. All have been an outstanding success. In addition, she has produced and dispatched our bi-annual Newsletter. We all owe her our deepest gratitude for her dedication and hard work. DEE THANK YOU.

So we must close FOSIM down. Many of you chose to pay by annual Standing Order or Direct Debt which are due in June. **You should now cancel the payment unless you are content for the funds to be directed to the PWRR and Queen's Museum at Dover Castle.** Elsewhere in the final Newsletter there is a piece on the History of our Surrey Museum which I hope will remind many of the determination, loyalty and hard work of the many who made it such a success. Special tribute must be made to Colonel Toby Sewell who had the inspiration to establish a Museum at Clandon House, to Lt Col Les Wilson who was the powerhouse and drive assembling and displaying the collection and Ian Chatfield who supervised two upgrading of the Museum and led our loyal Volunteers brilliantly. Ian has agreed to mastermind our website with Lindsay Parsons. My apologies to the many others who richly deserve mention but to name them all would take up a book!

I personally feel very sad how things have turned out feeling that some who have given the most have not been fully recognised. I am truly sorry. Thanks for your friendship over the years. Tony Ward

Maj (Retd) David Pollard - MUSEUM MANAGEMENT and TRUSTEES

Trustee Report – March 2024

Since I last reported, the Trustees met on 5th December 2023 and 30th January 2024. At the December meeting we discussed the future of SIM and moving the collection to Dover, as the environment at Surrey History Centre (SHC) has variations in temperature between working hours and overnight, and is not conducive to the preservation of the artefacts. It was also noted that, if possible, an office should be retained for the volunteers to carry out research tasks, as well as looking at extending the Collections Officer's contract beyond the current end date of March 2024. The Museum Director was asked to provide the Trustees with details about the proposed move and costings. It was also agreed that every effort should be made to retain a presence within Surrey, to make the connection to the PWRR.

At the January meeting the move and costings of the SIM collection were agreed, and that it should take place around 18/19 March. It was also agreed that the library and IT equipment would also move at the same time. Perhaps, naively, I assumed the books and IT equipment necessary for research would be retained so that the volunteers could carry on with research requests in an office, as noted at the December meeting. However, soon afterwards it transpired that the Museum Director intended to move all books and IT equipment, that the Collections Officer would work from home from mid-March, and that the SIM office would thus close. This sudden move to close the office, needless to say, came as a surprise and a shock to the volunteers and also to me.

The move to Dover will take place as planned, and the SIM office will close, in mid-March. For the next few months Dee Hutchison and Steve Blanchard, the two main volunteers, will be working on projects. However, there is a possibility that later in the year they may transfer to become volunteers with SHC in order to carry on research there and, if that does become the case, SHC would be delighted if they were to join.

Meanwhile, the Collections Officer's contract has been extended by six months to the end of September and she will prepare display material to be used for future displays at both Guildford Museum and in the Lightbox at Woking. It is good that a presence will be retained in both the Lightbox and Guildford, making the link to the PWRR.

It is now almost nine years since the fire, and in that time no alternative museum site has emerged. Even if a site had emerged, there are relatively few objects to display; any object that did not contain metal was destroyed in the fire and even quite a number of metallic objects simply vanished. Those of us who have been deeply involved with SIM came to recognise over the last few years that SIM could not go on indefinitely, and the time to "draw stumps" was becoming ever closer. It is, however, unfortunate that the closure has come about so quickly; I had anticipated it might have been around the end of this year.

After the fire, SIM received approximately £350,000 for the insured artefacts, a minor part of which was used to restore items, whilst the majority was for items that were destroyed. Not long after the fire, Col Tony Ward pointed out that whilst the artefacts were individually insured (thank you to Ian Chatfield for that!), the fixtures and fittings

had, quite reasonably, not been insured as there had never been a fire or flood at Clandon. The Queen's Royal Surreys spent just over £400,000 on the refurbishments and improvements of SIM between 2001 and 2010. Very supportively, our insurers, Ecclesiastical Insurance (EI), agreed that SIM could "piggy-back" an uninsured loss claim by SIM on any claim they might bring against the National Trust (NT) to cover their payout for the insured losses. Over the next several years Tony Ward, Steve Johnson (then Curator) and I assembled the details and costings for such a claim. We looked especially at 10 artefacts which, whilst insured, we believed had a substantially greater value than had been attached to them. Chief among these was the Qing vase. A porcelain expert, who contacted Steve Johnson some months after the fire, told him the vase was of very considerable value, even though the outer vase had been broken - probably during mess antics at Stoughton Barracks! It became evident during research that this was indeed the case, with a number of Qing vases selling at auction within the last five years for between £1-10 million. We agreed, through the lawyers working for EI and SIM, a division of whatever money they were able to obtain in settlement from the NT and the lawyers representing them. The outcome was that in February 2023, SIM finally received £454,000 of uninsured losses, and EI also received a sum which satisfied them. It is thus the case that the PWRR and Queen's Museum Trust will benefit from a substantial boost to their funds as SIM closes.

It is interesting to note that when the lawyers acting for the EI and SIM first informed the NT and their lawyers that we intended to make the uninsured loss claim, they responded by saying they said they would counter-claim. This would be on the basis that the SIM Curator, Steve Johnson, had failed to extinguish the fire when he opened the electrical distribution cupboard and discovered it. This ignored the fact that within about 30 seconds of opening the cupboard door and discovering the fire, the fire alarm sounded because sensors four floors up in the attic had been triggered when the fire reached there, and the evacuation was then ordered. Throughout the protracted claim process, the NT and their lawyers continually denied there was any fault or liability on the part of the NT for the fire. In the end, therefore, the NT and their lawyers went from a position claiming they would counter claim for SIM negligence, through outright denial, to eventually paying out well over £800,000 to EI and SIM. In some ways this settlement was disappointing but given the NT and their lawyers refused to go to mediation, which EI and SIM had requested, this was the best SIM could practically and realistically obtain.

I would like to personally thank all the volunteers who have played a part over the years, both at Clandon and since the fire. The dedication and loyalty shown by everyone has been gratifying to behold. To single out some people for particular thanks can perhaps be seen as to diminish the contributions of the others, and I assuredly do not mean to do so. It would, however, be remiss of me if I do not mention Dee Hutchison, Ian Chatfield and Steve Blanchard, who have been particular stalwarts of SIM and who have done so much, especially since the fire, with their painstaking and detailed work. This included sorting out well over 2,000 medals and re-ribboning them. Thank you all of you.
Adieu SIM, I will miss you!

A HISTORY OF THE SURREY INFANTRY MUSEUM

After the formation of the Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment in 1959, the ownership and management of the Regimental Museum artifacts and archives were vested in a charitable trust, The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum Trust. In 1978, after the closure of the Regimental Headquarters and the Museum at Kingston on Thames, the then Chairman of the Museum Trustees, Colonel J.W. Sewell, entered into negotiations with the National Trust for a new home for the Museum, and was offered a lease on generous terms in four very derelict rooms in the basement and two attic store rooms at Clandon Park House, near Guildford, formerly the seat of the Earls of Onslow, which had passed to the NT in 1956. The Onslow family had strong connections with the Regiment, making this a particularly appropriate as well as convenient site for the Museum's new home.

After a great deal of work by the Museum Trustees, Regimental volunteers and the National Trust, the new Museum opened to the Public in April 1981. The Museum told the story of the Regiment and its people through the displays of historic artifacts, paintings and medals and, equally important, provided a first class research service for scholars and for people investigating their family history. The Museum sponsored the writing of several books and supplements on Regimental history and organised occasional exhibitions both at Clandon Park and at various towns in the County. During this period, the



Museum gained Ministry of Defence support as a recognised military museum and accreditation under the national Museums Registration Scheme, both requiring high standards of operation and conservation.

In 1997, however, the National Trust informed the Museum Trustees that they intended to terminate the Museum's lease as the rooms were needed to expand the NT's commercial activities which provided financial support for the upkeep of Clandon Park. A search for new premises was started by the then Chairman of the Trustees, Colonel Peter Durrant and carried on by his successor, Colonel "Mac" McConnell; many sites were inspected, but all were either impractical or beyond the Museum's financial resources. At this stage, Brigadier Bob Acworth, President of the Regimental Association, reopened negotiations with the National Trust which culminated in the agreement of a new lease for the Museum up to 2011, with provisos that use of one of the Museum rooms be shared with NT to expand their commercial activities, that the Museum pay for the installation of a lift (£100,000) and that the Museum would refurbish its by now somewhat time-worn displays and furnishings.

The Regimental Charity agreed to provide financial support (£209,000) for the refurbishment, and Captain Adrian Birtles became Chairman of the Museum Trustees to carry it through. Fortuitously, at this time the NT needed to replace wiring, lighting and

ceiling panels throughout the Clandon Park basement, and the Museum closed for the 2001 season to allow this work and the refurbishment to be carried out.

The refurbished Museum opened to the public in March 2002, and was formally inaugurated by the Chairman of the National Trust, Mr. Charles Nunneley, in the presence of Mrs. Sarah Goad, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Surrey, Brigadier Bob Acworth, President of the Regimental Association and numerous civic dignitaries and members of the Regimental family. The Museum now had completely new showcases, with the displays re-arranged, some modern electronic equipment, a new shop and information point and improved facilities for research. Some further improvements were made in subsequent years funded by the Regimental Charity. It was agreed at this period that all the Regiments archives be passed to Surrey History Centre where they would be more assessable to the public and better cared for. During this period also, increasing integration of the Museum's activities into those of the National Trust at Clandon was achieved.

As the end of the Museum lease in 2011 approached, the National Trust again indicated that they would wish to put the lease on a more commercial basis if it was to be renewed. This led the Museum Trustees, now under the Chairmanship of Colonel Nicholas Davies, once again to consider alternative sites but, following some intensive negotiations led by Colonel Tony Ward, now President of the Regimental Association, agreement was reached with the National Trust for a 25-year lease for "One Pepper-Corn if asked", with the proviso that the history be better told and display made more appealing to the general public and further that the long term Governance and finances of The Museum be put on a sound footing. In order to meet this last proviso it was agreed that the Museum come under the Trusteeship of The Queen's and PWRR Museum and an endowment from The



Queen's Royal Surrey Charity Fund of £300,000 was made exclusively for the upkeep of The Surrey Infantry Museum. The modernisation by professional Museum designers (supported by the loyal Volunteers) was carried out during the 2010/2011 Winter closed season, with financial support from the Queen's Surrey Regimental Charity (£53,000) and from the Heritage Lottery Fund (£48,000). The Heritage Lottery Grant was dependent on securing a lease of at least 10 years. The modernised Museum reopened to the public in March 2011 under its new title, "The Surrey Infantry Museum", with improved and re-ordered displays and extensive use of electronic equipment. Some 28,000 visitors came during the nine months the House was open in 2011. At this time there were some 18 Volunteers helping the curator. A Friends of Surrey Infantry Museum was established with the twin aims of: Helping to educate the public of the Heritage of Surrey's Infantry Regiments and also to raise funds. Initially there were 250 members. This



concluded the work of the Trustees of the Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum, who handed the Museum on to the Trustees of the Museum of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and Queen's Regiment on 1st June 2011, and wound up their Trust.

On 30th April 2015 an electrical fire started in a fuse box located in a chimney shaft in the



basement. The fire quickly spread up the shaft to the attic and then downwards. The house and most of the contents were destroyed. The Museum being in the basement suffered complete destruction. Following the fire the Volunteers and the Curator (Stephen Jonson) rallied round. There then followed a long period during which some 2,500 medals, many welded together, were restored and re-ribboned plus many other items collected. The wider Regimental family donated many

Regimental Histories and other items. Guildford Borough Council offered a permanent display in an extended Guildford Museum. Unfortunately, financial constraints following the Pandemic meant that the extension plans had to be abandoned. However, displays were established within the existing Museum and at the Lightbox in Woking and the restored medals in a Medal Cabinet in the Research Room at Surrey History Centre. Surrey History Centre with whom close relationship since the passing of the Regimental archives readily offered office space. There then followed a long period of research determining exactly what had been lost, what could be restored and determining both the insured and un-insured losses. Eventually a satisfactory settlement was reached. Early in 2024 The Trustees decided to close the Office at the Surrey History Centre and remove everything to Dover leaving the medal collection at the Surrey History Centre and display at Guildford Museum and at the Lightbox at Woking. This brought an end the Surrey Infantry Museum.

Perhaps it is worth remembering the pleasure and satisfaction that the work of so many Volunteers and Staff were able to demonstrate so well. Below are a few extracts from the visitor's book shortly before it was destroyed in the devastating fire:

- Very inspiring to visit the "Home" of my Grandfather's Regiment.
- Overwhelmed to see our great uncle's medals proudly on display. Thank you.
- Very helpful in our aim to find out more about Dad.
- My grandfathers fought in WW1 in 2nd and 8th battalions respectively; the staff are very helpful – in a word brilliant.
- Make's one proud to be from Surrey and Britain.
- The most interesting military museum we have ever visited – well done!
- A superb museum; congratulations.
- So interesting; well laid out and easy to read notices – what an 'eye-opener'.
- Fascinating information, display and interactive resources; superbly drawn together.
- V. interesting and daughter loved the quiz.
- Great quiz and very helpful volunteer.
- My visit to this museum was amazing! I will never forget my experience.
- Taught me lots about the War. Fascinating. Love to come and visit again.

- A fantastic museum, I wish my granddad was here to see it too! Loved the idea of the stories and names behind the medal collection.
- Amazing. Well documented and presented history – very moving.
- Fantastic displays. My daughter loved it and the guide was very friendly and informative.
- Wonderful museum. Thank you to Nick for bringing the place alive for us and the children. We really enjoyed our visit. *(Note; Nick was one of our volunteer staff)*
- Excellent – especially the help given by David King *(note: David was one of our volunteer staff)*.
- The children (& adults) had a wonderful time dressing up. Thank you for your time and enthusiasm.
- Wonderful museum and very helpful staff.
- Very good exhibition and good to have the curator on site to give further details and help.
- A fantastic museum of history through the years.
- A brilliant museum honouring the special men who have fought for our freedom for centuries.
- History has never been so amazing and interesting.
- A real unexpected gem.
- Very interesting. Had a great time.
- I have learned much. Excellent display.
- You deserve a medal! Great museum, thank you.
- An amazing collection of medals. I haven't managed to drag my boyfriend out yet!
- I liked all of the medals. I liked the songs on the phone. I like the people in the museum.
- Great exhibition I can easily read facts about the soldiers and what they did! Especially the medals! Great Work.
- Very interesting looking at my father's old Regiment, East Surrey. The most interesting museum we have ever visited. Well Done! Great!
- Very interesting, the girls love to wear the jackets & hats, will be coming back with friends.

Finally, tribute must be given to those who contributed so much voluntarily: Colonel Toby Sewell who had the foresight to identify Clandon Park as a Surrey Regimental Home and Museum, Lt Col Les Wilson MBE who did so much. The Curators: Mrs Penny James and Ian Chatfield who both enhanced the Museum and developed encyclopaedic knowledge of the Regiments History and lead the Volunteers so well. Mrs D Hutchison who managed the Friends so brilliantly, Mr Steve Blanchard the medal expert who was key to re-ribboning all the medals and reordering them and finally all the Volunteers whose gave so much.

Go to: [Surrey Infantry Museum \(queensroyalsurreys.org.uk\)](http://queensroyalsurreys.org.uk) to see the Museum at Clandon before the fire and the fantastic displays.

ACW Mar 24

Surrey Infantry Collections Officer – Anna Jackson

From previous newsletter updates, staff and volunteers at the Surrey Infantry Collection have been working hard over the last two years to complete the Collections Rationalisation Project. I am happy to report this work has now been completed, including the much-anticipated move to the PWRR & Queen's Regiment Museum in Dover.



Before and after shots of the Collection Store at the Surrey History Centre, Woking

The extent of the Surrey Infantry Collection now stands at 976 object collections and 852 medals. Steve Blanchard is currently researching and cataloguing the medals on display in the Surrey History Centre, so this number will soon increase. Following such a devastating fire, it is credit to the fire service and the Museum's former staff and volunteers that we can say we still have such a breadth of items available to tell and preserve the stories of Surrey's Infantry.

Some highlights from the Collection include the 'head of Joss,' part of a statue of a Chinese deity looted from the Summer Palace in Beijing, found to be in stable condition and suitable for later display. Several objects relating to the history of Prisoners of War, sporting achievements and key battles have also been further researched, increasing our scope of future exhibitions.

However, many objects have been shortlisted for disposal for the collection. These include objects which are too fire damaged to warrant conservation, are hazardous to health, duplicate material, and objects which are not relevant to our regiments. These objects will be assessed by the Museum's Disposals Committee – chosen by the Museum Trustees – and will be removed from the collection following the Museums Association's Disposal Toolkit and Code of Ethics.

The Collections Rationalisation Project has culminated in removing the collection from Woking to Dover. This means that – excluding displays in Woking and Guildford – the collection is no longer permanently housed in Surrey. As a museum professional by training, I thought I would take this opportunity to outline the rationale for this decision from a Collections Management perspective.

Firstly, the actual content of the collection needs to be considered. The Surrey Infantry Collection comprises artwork, textiles, metal items, plastics, and documents. Each of these objects have their own environmental requirements (lux, relative humidity (RH) levels, and temperature) to best preserve them for future generations. Although we were able to install monitoring equipment in the collection store, we could not control the temperature or RH. This unfortunately led to the deterioration of some objects since 2015. In some instances, this deterioration has become hazardous not only to other objects, but to the health of staff and volunteers. Plastic items are especially dangerous, as they release noxious fumes as they decay and render all objects they come into contact with unsafe for use. A dehumidifier was purchased to counteract any future decay but is not a viable long-term solution given the office layout.

At the museum store in Dover, they can isolate items with different RH and lux requirements. They will also isolate items which are particularly fire damaged, so they do not contaminate any other objects. This will preserve the collection in a way in which we are unable to in Woking. Aside from environmental concerns, the store in Dover is larger, with better racking for artworks, and better security.

Ultimately, transferring the Surrey Infantry Collection to the PWRR & Queen's Regiment Museum allows us to better account for the full collection and delve deeper into any links between the PWRR and its forebears. Having the collection documentation in one place and on one system allows us to better analyse the data, uncovering previously hidden connections.

Finally, the move helps bring our history to a wider audience. Over the next few months, I will be curating several exhibitions for display at Guildford Museum and The Lightbox in Woking. As our collection is now with the team at Dover, when installing the exhibitions they can bring over objects from their own collection to emphasise links between the historical regiments in Surrey and the contemporary British Army. This will help us appeal to younger and more diverse visitors and help us remain relevant to today's audiences. Similarly, they can use objects from the Surrey Infantry Collection at the museum in Dover, introducing the people of Kent and visiting school groups to our stories.



As always, I would like to thank the tireless work of our volunteers: particularly Dee Hutchison for her unparalleled research skills, Steve Blanchard for his dedication to the medal collection, Ian Chatfield for his endless knowledge, and Chris and Alfie Boxall for their enthusiasm and perfect cups of coffee! This project would never have been possible without them, and on behalf of the whole Museum Team, I cannot thank them enough.

Secretary to FOSIM and QRS – Dee Hutchison

I cannot believe that I am producing this last FOSIM newsletter. To say I am sad is an understatement to say the least but amongst all the thanks I must add mine. Firstly to all those who supported FOSIM events, our talks, those who have given talks, our battlefield tours, our expeditions to places like Sandhurst Military Academy. I will miss meeting you all as we have had some fantastic event over the last 13 years.

But although the news is hard to take we still have the last and Final Battlefield Tour taking place in September 2025 under the Queens Royal Surreys Banner. I still remain the Secretary for the QRS and continue to support the families of those who goes to newer places with ensuring requirements for wreaths, drapes, music, the Collect are all sent out to the families requesting it. We still have database of over 500 QRS/QRs and ESR veterans. They are not forgotten in all this change. A QRS newsletter will still be published annually and the Combined Reunion will still take place. Ian Chatfield will still be maintaining the Queens Royal Surrey website with Lindsay Parsons. It is only the museum collection that undergoes this enormous change.

From 1st April 2024 all QRS matters are to be sent to the new email address grsinform@gmail.com. If you need to get in touch with me, Ian Chatfield or Steve Blanchard this is where you will now find us.

Both the Surrey Infantry Museum email address and the FOSIM email address will not be effective after 15th April 2024.

Anything as regards the museum artifacts etc then use new email address surrey@pwrrqueensmuseum.co.uk.

QRS/OMA/QUEENS/ESR Reunion is on 18th May 2024

Farnham Army Reserve Centre – Farnham Surrey

Timings 1.00 for 13.00 Lunch – 3 course meal = £19.00 per head. For booking form and meal section use email address grsinform@gmail.com.

East Surrey Reunion is on 5th October 2024. (Ken Bowden)

Whiteley Village, Walton On Thames, Surrey

Timings 13.00 – 17.00 Cost £5.00 per head.

Email address for booking form grsinform@gmail.com