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PC James Brown and Steve Johnson, curator for the East Surrey regiment (Image: Surrey Police)



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Regimental colours from [World War One](#) have been found and returned to a museum previously based at [Clandon Park](#).

A member of the public alerted [Surrey Police](#) after seeing the item for sale on an online auction website around ten days ago.

The colours were returned to the Surrey Infantry Museum, which was housed at Clandon Park House prior to the fire at the site in April this year, and is now temporarily based at the [Guildford Borough Council](#) offices in Millmead.

Colours were given to regiments in commemoration of duties performed during the war. Old colours were 'laid up' in churches or preserved in museums, but rarely owned by private collectors, so the sale of these items raised suspicions.

Steve Johnson, curator of the Surrey Infantry Museum, said: "The colours were in Wandsworth church and had been there since 1921.

"A member of the public alerted us and we told the police in case there had been malpractice. Some of our volunteers rallied around to find out what was happening.

"No one knows how they got from the church to the dealer, it's a mystery, but he hasn't done anything wrong.

"It does mean we have got a set of colours that are a hundred years old, that we can use to replace those lost during the fire [at [Clandon Park](#)].



The colours belonged to the East Surrey Regiment, which saw active service during the battle of the Somme and were part of the Kitchener's Army.

"They belonged to the 13th Battalion, which was raised in 1915 after the start of World War One," added Mr Johnson.

"It was raised as part of General Kitchener's 'New Armies' following the heavy losses in the early part of the war.

"One of many new battalions, it spent 1915 training and went out to fight in France in 1916.

"The 13th Battalion fought at Cambrai in 1917, where tanks were first used in large numbers.

"In 1918, they were involved in some very heavy fighting, during the last major German offensive of the war.

"They lost so many men that they were taken back to the UK and reformed with another battalion. They never fought again during World War One.

"King George V decided the battalions formed in 1915 should have their own colours, but since the 13th Battalion had already been disbanded it was 1921 before they were received.

"There was a big parade at Wandsworth where the colours were presented, and then they went straight into the church."

Mr Johnson explained the journey of regimental colours as they pass from the military and into disuse, and said the museum's recent find is "precious".



place in the church."

Preserving for future generations

"When they have been in a fire like ours have, they become a lot more precious," Mr Johnson added.

"About eight months ago, one of the church wardens at All Saints Church in Kingston said some of the colours were to be removed, and we put them in the museum in Clandon.

"We saved them from a skip, only for them to be burnt during the fire."

The colours still retain their importance to the regiments today, and are taken very seriously by troops, as seeing the colours flying meant "your mates were OK".

"Although they were just a four-by-four piece of silk, they were [and are] special to the regiment," said Mr Johnson. "They commemorate the men who have fallen and represent all the members of the regiment who have died in battle."

Three colours belonging to the [Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment \(PWRR\) forebears were uncovered](#) in the ruins of Clandon Park House four months after the fire earlier this year.