



"SANDBAG"

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

Volume 8 Issue 8

Branch secretary Arthur Pickup 01963-32952

September
2011

Next branch meeting 17th October 7 p.m.

Busy month ahead

I often think we have busy months but this now appears to be an understatement when we view what is happening in October.

Branch Annual Dinner 14th October at Sparkford Inn

I do need to have your application for tickets by 30 September. Full details were in August Sandbag but to remind you, tickets are £16 including transport there and home. It is a two course carvery meal and includes tea/coffee and port.

It is important to have your application as soon as possible as an event this size does need a lot of preparation.

Don't forget to let me know also if or where you would like to be picked up. West Hill, Memorial Hall or corner of Moor Lane. If you don't want picking up please also let me know so I can adjust the transport.

I am very pleased to confirm that Lucy Giles will be one of our guests of honour. As so many people know Lucy I have asked her to give us an overview of what she has been doing lately, which I am sure will be of great interest. Also with us will be Lt. Cdr. Rob Stephens from the Commando Helicopter Force, our adopted unit, who will give us an update on the CHF, particularly whilst on active service in Afghanistan.

I am also very pleased to be able to announce that Lucy has been promoted to Lt. Colonel.



Festival of Remembrance 5th November Colston Hall, Bristol

I have obtained a limited number of excellently located seats at the Festival of Remembrance on 5th November at the Colston Hall, Bristol. These are on a sale or return basis so it is important that you let me know if you would like to go, being sought after seats I will not be able to hold on to them after 5th October - all are in the stalls and cost £10. I must pay for these by 5th October or return them so please let me know urgently if you wish to go. I am happy if you just pay for the entrance tickets of £10 each by then and the coach cost in late October. The performance starts at 7 p.m. and features the Band of H.M. Light Cavalry with a full supporting cast, marking the 90th anniversary of the RBL. We will leave Wincanton at 12 noon to enable an afternoon in Bristol and then the coach will pick us up and take us to the Colston Hall from central Bristol. Cost for the coach is also £10.

Poppy Appeal Launch in Wincanton

Wincanton Poppy Appeal 2011/12 will be launched on Saturday 29th October and will be a Gala Concert given by Wincanton Silver Band in the Memorial Hall with all proceeds to Poppy Appeal 2011. The concert will take the form of well known nostalgic and patriotic music so bring those Union Jacks to wave ! Tickets are priced at £7.50 and available at Divine Wines, The Town Hall and through the branch officials. We are most grateful to the Band and I am sure it will be another terrific event as always from the Silver Band.

Coffee Morning also 29th October

In conjunction with the concert to launch 2011 Poppy Appeal there will be a Coffee Morning at the Memorial Hall from 10 a.m. on 29th October. We will also have an exhibition on the theme of Remembrance. All proceeds of the event go to Poppy Appeal.

Our 90th anniversary year

I know by now we are all fully aware that the Legion is celebrating it's 90th anniversary, so I thought it a good opportunity to let you know some of history.

The Royal British Legion was formed on 15 May 1921 bringing together four National Organisations of ex-Service men that had established themselves after the Great War of 1914-1918.

The main purpose of the Legion was straightforward: to care for those who had suffered as a result of service in the Armed Forces in the Great War, whether through their own service or through that of a husband, father or son. The suffering took many forms: the effect of a war wound on a man's ability to earn a living and support his family; or a war widow's struggle to give her children an education.

But even those who had come through the war relatively unscathed struggled with employment. As a result of the war, Britain's economy plummeted and in 1921 there were 2 million unemployed. Over six million men had served in the war - 725,000 never returned. Of those who came back, 1.75 million had suffered some kind of disability and half of these were permanently disabled. To this figure then had to be added those who depended on those who had gone to war - the wives and children, widows and orphans as well as the parents who had lost sons in the war, on whom they were often financially dependent.

The situation so moved Lance Bombardier Tom Lister, a Lancastrian, that he decided that if the Government was either unable or unwilling to do anything to improve the lives of ex-Service men, he would do something about it himself. This eventually led to the formation of The Royal British Legion.

When the Legion's leaders looked around them in 1921, not only did they see a gigantic task in front of them looking after those who had suffered in the recent war, they also sought to prevent further sacrifice by reminding the nation of the human cost of war and to work actively for peace.

By the time of the Legion's formation in 1921, the tradition of an annual Two Minute Silence in memory of the dead had been established. The first ever Poppy Appeal was held that year with the first Poppy Day on 11 November 1921.



The first type of poppy as in 1921

Poppies were first suggested as a symbol of Remembrance in the USA by Miss Moina Michael in November 1918 and were adopted by the American Legion in 1920. In August 1921, Madame Guerin introduced her poppies, made by a French-American charity's widows, to the British Legion. The next suitable occasion for a poppy-linked appeal was Armistice Day and so the first Poppy Appeal was born. They didn't know if it would work but ordered nine million poppies! On the day itself, the first poppy was bought in London a few seconds after midnight. From that moment it was a seller's market: the poppies were on sale at an official price of three pence but before breakfast single petals were selling at Smithfield Market for £5. All day long motor cars fetched poppies and crate after crate was emptied until supplies ran out. A message from Queen Mary brought sellers to Buckingham Palace, but hearing that poppies were in short supply she bought only two. A basket of poppies auctioned at Christie's raised nearly £500.

The first appeal raised £106,000 (nearly £30 million in today's terms) and all the poppies were supplied from France. In 1922 the "Poppy Factory" was established in the UK to keep costs down and employing disabled ex-Servicemen to make the poppies. Three times as many poppies were ordered for the next appeal and it made £204,000 with lower overheads.

Note that poppies were "sold" when the appeal started but charity legislation now requires them to be 'distributed in return for donations'.

The appeal built up quickly to produce its best results (in real terms, adjusted for inflation) during the 1930s and 1940s with record donations during the Second World War.

There were worries about supply of materials to make the poppies during the war and whether supplies would survive bombing raids but the public rallied and showed its generosity and support. By the 1960s,

the appeal was facing problems that are all too familiar today - a decline in the number of collectors and the need to recruit from the younger age groups. The buttonhole range was reduced to a single style of poppy and young girls were recruited from universities and technical colleges and equipped with new style collecting boxes and colourful plastic bags of poppies. With the "swinging sixties" in full force, mini-skirts were the order of the day. A single poppy meant that people could "give what they wanted" instead of having a set amount and this helped when the coinage changed with the introduction of decimalisation. Inflation continued to affect the collection during the 1970s and early

Poppy Appeal in the 1920s



1960s style

80s but the Falklands War saw a surge in awareness of the needs of ex-Servicemen. As the concept of "celebrity" grew with the public, the 1980s saw the Poppy Appeal attracting support from well known figures such as actor Michael Caine, comedian Jim Davidson and Falklands veteran Simon Weston. In 1991 at the time of the First Gulf War, the launch was held in the Kuwait Embassy in London and the following year at El Alamein with the Prime Minister John Major. Another Prime Minister, Tony Blair featured with Arsene Wenger in 1998. 1997 bridged the generation gap with The Spice Girls teaming up with Dame Vera Lynn. Dame Vera had an encore performance in 2009 pairing with Hayley Westenra. The music industry featured quite often with Westlife (1999), SClub 7 (with Thora Hird in 2000), Hear'Say (2001), Katherine Jenkins (2006) and The Saturdays (2010). Sporting stars Kelly Holmes and Michael Vaughan featured in 2004 and 2005 respectively. In 2007, our beneficiaries took centre stage with a new star, Poppy Man, who went to Basra in 2008 for our award winning live broadcast.

We were granted "Royal" status in 1971, and extended our membership to serving members of Her Majesty's Forces, as well as ex-Service personnel, in 1981. Now, anyone can become a member of The Royal British Legion. We welcome men and women of all ages, whether they have served in the Armed Forces or not.



Dame Vera Lynn & Hayley Westenra

Last seaside trip of the year

There are places available on the trip to Exmouth on Saturday 24th September. Priced £10 as usual the coach leaves Memorial Hall at 9 a.m.

County Poppy Appeal Launch in Taunton 23rd October

Somerset County launch Poppy Appeal 2011 is at Taunton on 23rd October. This will be discussed at the September branch meeting and if there is enough interest we will lay on a coach. What we do know is that 40 Commando Royal Marines will parade through the town. There will be numerous events being held on the day and I understand it will focus on Vivery Park but as information is sketchy at the moment I cannot let you know more than this.

Yeovil branch Golf Day 14th October at Long Sutton

Yeovil branch are holding a Golf Day at Long Sutton Golf Course on 14th October. Contact Paul McKenzie on 07779235560 for details or online www.rblyeovil.co.uk where an entry form can be downloaded. The day includes tea or coffee and a two course lunch. Tee Off 10.30 a.m. Our members can take part as a team or an individual.

Bingo Supporting Our Troops 2nd November

We are grateful to Karen Dunford again for organising another Bingo in aid of Wincanton Supports Our Troops. It will take place on 2nd November in the Memorial Hall. All the proceeds will be given to the Commando Helicopter Force who are on active service in Afghanistan and it will help to provide extra things for their Christmas Party. We sent them £1000 for their party last year, feedback was very positive and they were most grateful. Please support Karen's Bingo. Doors open at 6.30 p.m. and "Eyes Down" at 7.p.m.

Welcome new member

We would like to welcome John Jeremiah who became a member during the last few weeks.

Poppy Appeal 2010

Arthur tells me we have broken the £13000 mark for Poppy Appeal 2010 - another record year. Thanks to everyone for their support in achieving this remarkable figure. A final amount will be announced once the accounts are closed.

Donation from "Wincanton Supports Our troops"

Our sister organisation Wincanton Supports our Troops made a donation of £400 to the Commando Helicopter Force on 1st September. The money was used to help them finance a Families Day which included a barbecue, flying displays and family entertainment at RNAS Yeovilton. The day was a great success and Ron and I along with Eileen and Sandra attended the event and handed over the cheque which was most gratefully received. It was mentioned there that the Commando Helicopter Force would most appreciate help with their Christmas Party again this year and as we discussed this at a branch meeting recently I indicated that we would again make a donation for this purpose.



One of our members contacted me the other day to say how much he enjoyed the ANZAC biscuits he bought from Morrison's and thought that some members may not realise not only how good the biscuits are but that 4% of price of a packet is donated to the RBL. I know some of you are aware that indeed they are excellent biscuits and sales help the RBL but some may not. ANZAC stands for the Australian & New Zealand Army Corps which was the name under which the two countries troops fought in the First World War. Legend has it that the recipe was devised by wives of soldiers and that the biscuits did not go stale too quickly and the biscuits transported well when sent to the soldiers by sea.