



"SANDBAG"

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

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Next branch meeting 14th April at 7.00 p.m. in Memorial Hall

Old Faithful 70th anniversary commemoration.

We have been planning for this event for some time now and finally things are taking shape. Here is the latest information I have to date.

The parade and main commemoration will take place on Sunday 22nd June, this has been decided because to hold an event of this size on the actual anniversary would be impossible, as it is a week day. Since the 60th anniversary the road at the memorial on Bayford Hill has become very busy and closing it for two hours or so as we did 10 years ago would not now be practical. A Sunday will also allow the maximum number of townspeople to attend. We will observe prayers at Bayford Hill as we always do on 25th June and this will take place at 11 a.m. as usual.

On Sunday 22nd June we will assemble at Carrington Way car park at 1.45 p.m. for a march off to the Memorial Hall at 2 p.m. a religious service will then take place around the War Memorial which will finish at approximately 2.50 p.m. and then at 3 p.m. Wincanton Silver Band will be holding a commemoration concert in the Memorial Hall.

The parade will be led by King's School, Bruton, Combined Cadet Force Band (as they did 10 years ago) and Wincanton Silver Band will play the hymns at the War Memorial. It is intended that the main emphasis this year will be on the youth of the town as it is hoped they will continue the legacy which we have undertaken over the years. King Arthur's School will have a prominent role as will our affiliated cadet units.

I am still working on other things which I will confirm as soon as possible.

A detailed plan will be in the May Sandbag which will include all the final arrangements.



Peter Sherry

Our stalwart and supporter Peter Sherry passed away last month and several members formed an Honour Guard at his funeral on 17th February. As well as being greatly admired Peter was much loved by many at the branch and his passing is a great loss. He always turned up to help with selling poppies and was present at all of our parades.

Peter saw active service with the Royal Signals during World War Two as a motor cycle dispatch rider. His fondness of motor cycles first came to light when he served as a lad in the local Home Guard and it naturally followed on when his call up papers arrived. Like lots of veterans Peter was always modest about his wartime exploits but it was only at our last Coffee Morning that he told me he was present at Pegasus Bridge, Normandy during the D-Day landings and delivered what was probably the first dispatch that Lord Lovatt (who commanded the relieving troops at the bridge) received. Peter was severely wounded in actions around Caen and was evacuated to hospital in England for a long period.

These months of February & March during the Great War

Over the next four years our minds will be focused on the 100th anniversary events of the Great War, a war which greatly affected Wincanton. It was during February and March on different years of the war that two families in the town learnt of the tragic loss of their sons.

Harold Grant-Dalton was the son of the Rector of Wincanton (from 1888 to 1896), his parents the Rev. Colin Grant-Dalton and Mrs. Amy Ellen Grant-Dalton were the first inhabitants of the then Rectory at Churchfield, Wincanton. Harold Grant-Dalton was born on 10th March 1890 in Churchfield. He also had a brother, Leslie, who was a regular soldier and lieutenant when war broke out. Leslie served with his regiment at Mons and Le Cateau and survived the war. Harold's home at the time of his death was The Estate Office, Mere, Knutsford, Cheshire and his mother by that time a widow was living at Ellerthwait, Eastbourne.

Harold Grant-Dalton was a member of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and gained a temporary commission as Sub Lieutenant RNVR on 11th January 1916 and temporary Lieutenant 31st December 1917. He was drafted into the BEF on 30th November 1916 joining the Royal Naval Brigade, Hood Battalion, on 14th December 1916 and sent to the 3rd Army Infantry School between 28th December 1916 and 4th February 1917 when he rejoined Hood Battalion. He was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous "gallantry and resource". His citation reads "When all the officers of his company had become casualties he assumed the command and by his bravery and personal example was able successfully to defend an exposed piece of the line. He had on previous occasions done good work" - London Gazette 18 July 1917 page 7230. During his act of bravery he became wounded and missing. He was taken prisoner of war and admitted to the German War Hospital at Ohrdruf south of Gotha, Germany. He had sustained gunshot wounds to the pelvis and died of his wound at 10 p.m. on 24th March 1918. He is buried in the Niederzwehren Military Cemetery, Kassel near Frankfurt. Plot IV. H.9., he was 28 years old. A report of his death was in the Western Gazette on 13th September 1918 and showed his estate as £24,033 which was a considerable sum in those days.

Harold Davis was born in June 1891 in Wincanton, over 100 years later when writing this, it is difficult to find information but on his Army attestation papers he shows his mother as "Effie" and there is absolutely no information on his father. As a boy he went to Wincanton Parish Church Sunday School and was a choirboy for many years. He also acted as the "organ blower" in the church. Harold trained as a hairdresser and had a connection, possibly a family connection, with Edward Edwards who was a hairdresser and had a shop at 35 High Street. Records we do have of Harold make for more questions than answers. He left Wincanton and lived with his mother who was by this time living in Kingston, Surrey at 62, Richmond Road. On 21st October 1909 Harold joined the Army Special Reserve in Kingston, this was similar to the modern Territorial Army. In the remarks on his enlistment papers it showed his employer as E. Edwards (hairdresser), 35 High Street, Wincanton. By March 1910 he decided to join the Regular Army - The East Surrey Regiment. In fact he was with the troops of the 2nd Battalion when they came to Wincanton later in 1910 for extensive manoeuvres in the area. Harold seemed to be a good soldier because his records show he was granted "Class 1 pay in February 1914 and acquired his marksman badge as a "1st class shot" in April 1914.

The Regiment were then posted overseas on garrison duty in Chaubattia, India, returning to England on 23rd December 1914 and landing Devonport from where they moved to Winchester.

After just a few short weeks the East Surrey's refitted out for duty in France and became attached to 85th Brigade, 28th Division. The 28th was formed at Hursley, Pitt Hill and Magdalen Hill Camps near Winchester in December 1914 - January 1915 and was rushed as a much-needed reinforcement to France. Shortage of some types of units were filled by Territorial units taken from other Divisions. The units of the Division embarked at Southampton and 2nd Bn. The East Surrey Regiment landed at Le Havre on 19 January 1915 and then moved to concentrate in the area between Bailleul and Hazebrouck. From their arrival until 13th February 1915 no action was fought and they undertook extensive training and moving of supplies to the front line south of Ypres in Belgian Flanders.

On 13th February the East Surrey's were relieved by the 3rd Bn Middlesex Regiment but they remained in the area to support them and strengthening existing trenches. At 8.30 a.m. on 14th February the battalion

moved out for their first action against the enemy to attack and capture a lost trench. The attack commenced at 2 p.m. in a very exposed position and the attack was held up. Vicious fighting took place which resulted in 8 killed, 106 wounded and 37 missing. Harold was one of those killed, his body was never found. In the following five days of fighting barely 200 men remained of the original 1000 who had disembarked at Le Havre (either killed, missing or wounded).

Harold Davis was 24 years old and is commemorated on the memorial to the missing of the Ypres Salient at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium.

I have been approached by Wincanton Museum to give a lecture on the Great War and how it affected Wincanton. I will use the opportunity as a prelude to our town commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the Great War. I will make available as many relevant photographs that I have and show some artefacts from the battlefields. I will also show copies of several of soldiers army records.

Although it is quite early yet to clarify what the branch will do to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of war (4th August 1914) , I can confirm that the branch is determined to recognise this very significant occasion.

The joint venture with the Wincanton Museum and historical society will take place at the Memorial Hall on 16th May at 7.30 p.m.

No further details are known as yet but the date is firmly booked.



Ros Wilkins retires as OC 2277 Squadron ATC

It is over 5 years (in fact it was August 2008) since Wincanton branch achieved a formal affiliation with 2277 Squadron ATC. Since then we have had their constant support under OC Ros Wilkins. Ros and the cadets have attended our parades and supported our Poppy Appeal collections. Due to her many other commitments Ros retired as commanding officer of 2277 Squadron on 3rd February and we wish her well and do sincerely hope we will see her again in Wincanton in the near future.

Commemorating the crash of the RAF Dakota near the old Zeals airfield.

I wrote in Sandbag a short while ago about another aircraft crash (other than "Old Faithful") which took place on 19th February 1945. A Dakota aircraft, serial number TS436 was attempting a take off from RAF Zeals, not far from Stourhead estate at an area known as Beech Clump. The crash was attributed to "pilot error" and ironically only the pilot Flt/Lt. M. Mackay RAF DFC survived. On board were 20 Royal Air Force, Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force personnel who were en-route to Leicester Officer Training Unit.

On 19th February last, Arthur Pickup and Peter Cox attended the 69th anniversary commemoration at the memorial plaque and paid respects on behalf of the branch. It is hoped that we will continue to observe the anniversary especially next year when it is of course the 70th anniversary.



<p style="text-align: center;">April trip to Cardiff</p> <p>The coach is filling up fast so please contact me if you wish to take part in our first trip of the year to Cardiff. We will depart from the Memorial Hall at 8.30 a.m. on 12th April to enable a full day in Cardiff and will return home around 7 p.m. We will stop in central Cardiff for the castle, shops and many other sites. It is also possible to get a bus to St. Fagans Museum of Welsh Life. Cost has been fixed at £12 again this year (£6 for youngsters).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">First Coffee Morning of the year</p> <p>It seems a long time since our last Coffee Morning which launched Poppy Appeal back in October and lots seems to have happened since then. Our first Coffee Morning this year will take place on 26th April at the Memorial Hall starting at 10 a.m. as usual and finishing at noon. If you have any raffle prizes you would like to donate, please contact Arthur who is coordinating the event.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">May trip set for 24th May to Chichester</p> <p>We have just confirmed the date for our May trip as 24th May with a destination of Chichester. This has all the makings of a good trip because Chichester as well as being a fantastic town to visit is also close to both Bognor and Littlehampton. There are buses from Chichester (anyone with a bus pass goes free !) to both towns and again we will leave at 8.30 a.m. to make the most of it. Same price as usual (£12 and £6). Please book as soon as possible to enable planning.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Annual Dinner</p> <p>It may seem a long way away but many members have asked for the date of our annual dinner to enable them to plan around it. I have booked the dinner for 10th October again at the Olive Bowl, Gillingham. It is too early to give much details but I will keep everyone informed when it gets nearer. Anyway, please note the date.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">June !!!</p> <p>We have the offer of a very special trip for June BUT this will depend on a lot of support and firm commitments. IF we get enough people we could take part in a combined cruise and then come back on a steam train where we will have a cream tea of two large scones with jam & cream washed down with a cup of tea. The boat departs from Bristol harbour Millenium Square, and takes us to the historic landmarks of Bristol. We would then arrive at a countryside rail-way station for a journey by steam train through the scenic Avon Valley. I HAVE NOT BOOKED this as I need to know if people will attend. Please let me know “in principle” if you would like to go. The group price for the boat/train is £17 so if we paid the normal £12 each that would be £29 each, however if we make no loss on the April & May trips I may be able to discount the coach price. I MUST have knowledge of if you wish to attend.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Diary dates for June & July</p> <p>6th June: Dorchester will observe the 70th anniversary of the D-Day, Normandy Landings. The event takes place at 10.30 a.m. outside The Keep Museum.</p> <p>22nd June: The Rifles exercise the Freedom of Bridport I hope to have more details for Sandbag next month.</p> <p>6th July: Fovant Badges Memorial Service takes place in Fovant village at 2.15 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Another diary date too !</p> <p>Our big summer fundraising event is, as I mentioned in December, is going to be the Armed Forces Family Day at the Millers Arms which is only 3 months away on 28th June. It should be bigger and better than last year which was our first such event. Please note the date in your diaries as not only will we need help but also your attendance. Full details will be following in April and May issues of Sandbag.</p>