



"SANDBAG"

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

Volume 13 Issue 1

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Jan/Feb
2017

10th Anniversary of "new" war memorial.

It seems to some of us that we have always had the War Memorial which stands in the Memorial Hall grounds but remarkable as it is, last 11th November was in fact the 10th anniversary of the memorial being unveiled. Looking back on those 10 years for me it seems like another age, in fact to a certain extent it is now certainly a new "generation" of members. I was first approached by the then RBL branch committee to see if it was feasible in not only finding a site for a visible memorial but also to fund the costs of building a memorial. Trevor Mills-Smith was then the RBL branch chairman and Percy Jee was our president. We formed a "Wincanton



New War Memorial Appeal" to raise the funds and I was asked to chair the group - along with Trevor and Percy, Bill Rumbold, Laurie Carr, Ron Peet and Bob Chamberlain. It was a delicate task in as much as we did not want to detract from the original memorials in the Parish Church for which there is rightly great sentiment. It was also decided not to show the names of the War Dead of the two world wars on the memorial as these were named in the Parish Church and the memorial is intended for all wars. We decided it would be fitting that the memorial be in the grounds of the Memorial Hall - because the correct title of the hall is Wincanton War Memorial Hall and it was raised by public subscription after the Second World War as a tribute to the War Dead of both world wars. The hall trustees readily approved the request and granted permission to erect the memorial where it stands today. It was decided that the material must be locally sourced and ideally made of the yellow Somerset stone common to the area. Our nearest quarry is in Doultong near Shepton Mallet and all the stone comes from there. We also wanted it to be made by a local craftsman and Tom Green whose



Members and families at the unveiling

premises is behind the Memorial Hall was the obvious choice and he agreed to build the structure. Fundraising was very difficult as the total costs would exceed £22,000 (a daunting sum then and now !) but with the help of many private donors, clubs, a big town raffle and both the District Council and Town Councils substantially contributing, the sum was eventually raised. It was then too that I wrote the book on the War Dead of the Second World War which also achieved nearly £3000 in sales. Colin Winder donated his professional services and drew up plans from our rough idea of an obelisk on a plinth. (continued on back page)

Remembrance 2016



Again this year we observed Remembrance in our usual way with events on both 11th November and Remembrance Sunday 13th November. On the 11th we assembled at the War Memorial in the grounds of the Memorial Hall and observed the National Two Minutes Silence. This year the Last Post was played by Dan Chapman from King Arthur's School (pictured right). Wreaths were laid by the Mayor Cllr Howard Ellard and our branch officers. Our chaplain Revd. Nigel Feaver led us in prayers and accompanied us to the Old Faithful Memorial at Bayford where we also laid wreaths.



At the Old Faithful Memorial Terry Williams our standard bearer carried our branch standard and Petty Officer Lee Straw from Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton carried the Union Flag.

Remembrance Sunday was observed fully in our traditional way with the church parade led by Wincanton Silver Band, preceded by crosses laid at the War Memorial by cubs and brownies. Cadets from two of our affiliated units our Sea Cadets and Air Training Corps Cadets sent good representation and instructor Chief Petty Officer "Jack" Frost carried the Union Flag. Col. Lenny Brown RM and Lt. Col. Colin Thomas took the salute along with the mayor Cllr. Howard Ellard. After the church service we were treated to tea and cakes supplied and served by Wincanton Cubs which was excellent and for which we are most grateful.



Poppy Appeal 2016

The latest total for this years Poppy Appeal stands at £13008, of which well over £6000 was raised at Morrison's and a further £1000 plus was raised by our Sea Cadet unit at Wincanton Racecourse. We would sincerely like to thank our cadets and all those who helped this year especially those who came forward at short notice to collect at Morrison's - without your support we would not have achieved this.



Remembrance Sunday parade
(photo courtesy of Terry Fisher photography)

Christmas Carols

This year we have been fortunate to have been able to attend two outstanding Christmas carol events, both involving groups of young people and one in association with our friends from local supporting groups. The first was our joint event on 3rd December with the Wincanton Live at Home Scheme. The evening included music from members of Wincanton Silver Band, the Wincanton Youth Theatre Group and Wincanton Choir enabling everyone to join in with singing popular carols. It was extremely well attended and enabled the branch to share in half of the profits - our share was over £300 which



will go towards branch funds. For which we are most grateful to everyone who helped. As usual the Silver Band played magnificently and accompanied the carols enabling us all to sing along and with the choir it gave us a memorable experience which we do hope to repeat next year ! The Wincanton Youth Theatre gave us an interpretation of "I wish I was home Christmas" - a reflection on the trenches of the First World War Our second event was truly amazing and one for which we did not expect. A group of us attended the Fleet Air Arm Church at Yeovilton village on 13th December. As we all know the church is very beautiful and atmospheric especially at Christmastime but we were not prepared for such a memorable evening. Our affiliated Sea Cadets at TS Mantle VC always organize a Carol Service and we were told it is sometimes "unusual" and very light hearted, with the cadets getting fully engaged in the evening. To our great pleasure both the Revd. Peter Dixon chaplain to 1 Regt. Army Air Corps and Revd. Andrew Hillier chaplain at RNAS Yeovilton led the service and it was deliberately pitched towards encouraging the cadets to take part as well as

singing along with the very popular carols. What was the most "unusual" was Peter's and Andrew's address which did indeed get the attention of the youngsters because the Christmas story was the theme and it was interspersed with hidden references to popular brands of sweets, which when identified were given as "rewards" to the youngsters. To be honest all the adults joined in too and it did point to a tremendous way of involving young people with the church at Christmas. I know I am speaking for all of us in saying we all came away feeling very happy and full of Christmas cheer (the sweets were all consumed by the cadets !). Again we do hope we can attend next year - it was so enjoyable !!



Cadets with Revd. Peter Dixon (left) & Revd. Andrew Hillier (right) with church custodian Julie Halford (centre)

Christmas lunch 2016

We had another splendid Christmas lunch at the Millers Inn on 15th December which was well attended and enjoyed by all. Most people opted for the traditional Christmas meal - I heard no complaints except that the food was too much ! This year our group was accommodated in the main bar area which was decorated for Christmas and was very atmospheric.



At the time of construction a sword was carved in the obelisk but this proved impracticable as it was too delicate and pieces broke off in the frosts. The gates were made by Piers Ostromoff at his forge at Snag Farm and Piers was asked if he could replicate the Excalibur Sword which is always found on the Cross of Sacrifice at British War cemeteries. Piers agreed he could make the sword and this is the one we see today. Because funding was slow to come in only the obelisk and plinth were able to be paid for by November 2006. Our branch chaplain the Revd. Stafford Low, Parish Rector at the time led us in prayers around the obelisk at the unveiling on 11th November 2006 and I clearly remember that as Stafford ended prayers, signalling the Last Post be played the Town Hall clock chimed 11 a.m. (sadly the Town Hall clock was not always correct at the time but it was a meaningful moment !). The then Member of Parliament David Heath unveiled the obelisk that day and fundraising continued. I was introduced to a government scheme for offenders to work in the community and after consultations it was agreed that our memorial fitted the criteria which greatly helped cash flow as we needed to breach the original wall at the Memorial Hall and buy material for a new section to be fitted with gates, this was done during the summer of 2007 along with seats at the side of the gates which finished the memorial to the condition it is today.



Cutting the first turf

Visit to the Houses of Parliament Monday 8th May 2017

You will remember that I asked David Warburton our member of parliament if he could help us with a visit to the Houses of Parliament. David's secretary has just confirmed she has arranged this and it will be on 8th May, Tours are strictly limited to 20 people on each tour but we have been very fortunate to have been granted two tour groups and a total of 40 places. The cost of the trip will be £15 in total. The tour will be similar to Dartmouth in that there will be stairs and walking for the entire visit is needed although disabled access is available.

We will need to leave Wincanton at 8 a.m. prompt to enable us to get there. We will have a 50 seat coach so if anyone would like to just go to London for personal sightseeing there will be 10 additional places. As the trip was announced at recent functions there are people booked already so I would strongly advise that you book your place urgently to avoid disappointment. I will update everyone over the coming months.

First trip of 2017

Our next trip will be to **Swindon on 1st April** (as we can't rely on good weather) where we can visit the Railway Museum or visit the two giant shopping centres and town. By request of members one of the summer trips will be to the Thames Valley. Cost remains at £12 with other trips planned each month.

Dennis Trott

It is with great personal sadness that I must announce that my dear friend and ardent branch member, Dennis Trott died on 9th December after a short illness. Myself and many others are still in shock and will greatly miss him.

Dennis spent his entire life farming at Wincanton and went on to serve as a town councillor and then district councillor getting involved in many local projects. Dennis's encouragement and support was felt when the War Memorial was first planned and can be seen in the picture above 2nd on the right, next to Tim Carroll, when they cut the first turf at the War Memorial in 2006. Dennis was a very active member of the branch and was always there when we needed him, he and Ann devoting much time to help at fundraising events. We will also remember with affection the fun times we all had too when Dennis and Ann would always attend social events and our regular trips. It is an understatement to say we will miss Dennis and I know we all offer our sincere thoughts and condolences to Ann and her son Russell at this sad time.



Dennis's funeral will take place on **13th January at the parish church of St. Peter and St. Paul at 2 p.m.**