



# "SANDBAG"

## WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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### NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

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#### Armed Forces Day 2017

Armed Forces Day, 24<sup>th</sup> June, was celebrated in fine style in Wincanton this year in spite of the weather including driving rain at times ! Attendance was quite good and supported considering the weather, present at the event were HMS Heron Volunteer Band from RNAS Yeovilton sharing slots with our award winning Wincanton Silver Band and supported by Wincanton Youth Theatre performing songs and dance reviews.

The event opened with HMS Heron Band playing Heart of Oak, the March Past of the Royal Navy,

#### HMS Heron Band



#### Wincanton Silver Band



synchronized with a low flying visit overhead of a Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter.

This year we were fortunate to have visits from Wincanton Fire Service - in between duty calls and the Commando Helicopter Force who sent personnel along with their all terrain vehicle. The 2nd Templecombe Scouts were there too supplying us with their excellent barbecue food.

Our Armed Forces Day has now become an annual celebration in Wincanton and has taken place for the last five years.

We hold the event to show of support and gratitude for our armed forces and takes the form of a family event in

the grounds of the Memorial Hall Wincanton – with a barbecue, stalls and a variety of entertainment. A raffle and sale of poppy related items enabled the branch to add £225 to our Poppy Appeal which was down on the amount raised at the event last year (obviously due to the weather). Although not generally realized, Poppy Appeal runs all year round and our Poppy Appeal organizers have been fundraising and holding events to boost funds.

Our Armed Forces Day is the largest event of its kind in East Somerset.

#### Wincanton Youth Theatre



## Ken Collins

It is with great personal sadness that I have to let you know that Ken Collins passed away on 19th June after a very short illness. Ken was held in great regard and fondness within the branch and is indeed a very sad loss. Wonderful stories have surfaced of Ken's involvement with the Wincanton Amateur Dramatics group and his great sense of fun. It has been nice hearing about Ken and his interpretation of the "sand dance" and his pantomime characters during this period !

Ken was born and brought up in the East End of London and was twelve when the Second World War broke out. His parents and family lived in Manor Park, East Ham which later was to become the front line of the Blitz. Throughout the late summer of 1940 East Ham was heavily bombed which continued throughout the winter of 1940/1941. Ken became one of the child "evacuees" just before Christmas 1940 and was moved to



a village near Cirencester—this was a great adventure for him and his friends as they had never seen the countryside. Ken's mother and father were both air raid wardens (ARP) and on 21st April 1941 had just left duty and were resting at home when a stray bomb hit their house and both were killed outright. Ken left school at the age of 14 and became an apprentice jockey in Lambourne in August 1941 where he remained until he was called up for military service in January 1945, he enlisted into the Royal Navy. After trade assessments Ken became a steward and transferred to barracks at Chatham, his first ship being the escort carrier HMS Rajah which was sailing for Sydney Australia. After a spell at a shore establishment in Sydney Ken went upon quite an adventure with several ships which were travelling throughout the Far East, one of which was HMS Bonaventure—a submarine "mother ship" which was to undertake an extensive voyage including Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan which became rather an unusual one, including the ship running aground on a reef. The crew were given shore leave when the ship finally arrived at Kuri, Japan and from here

Ken and his shipmates made a journey to Hiroshima—site of the dropping of the atomic bomb which brought about the Japanese surrender. I remember Ken telling me he picked up a bottle he found in Hiroshima and took it as a souvenir. He kept the bottle in a cupboard when he got home and several years later he accidentally dropped it and to his total amazement the bottle disintegrated into powder, obviously the effect of radiation. Upon demob Ken returned to his old horseracing career after applying for a job in Sporting Life magazine which was in Wincanton. He stayed with it for four years but then realised it was not for him. By this time he had met his wife Pam at a dance in Wincanton and married her in 1952. He then worked 16 years at Wincanton Transport in Sherborne and later in Mere for Beaumont's who made industrial chimneys of steel which were sometimes 280 feet high. Ken loved horses and was a keen rider for many years, several youngsters in Wincanton being thankful to Ken for teaching them to ride.

Ken was a wonderful character and will be sadly missed by all of us.

Our sincere condolences go to Pam and Nicholas.

**Ken's funeral is at the parish church of St. Peter & St. Paul at 2 p.m. on 7th July.**

*Tony*

## Quiz Night raises funds for Poppy Appeal.

On 22nd June around 40 members and regulars attended a Quiz Night organised by Vikki and Dave at the Millers Inn. With all the other events we have had and are having the Miller's Inn has become our pub of choice . Many of us had a meal together before the quiz. A fun evening was had by all and we said we should try to repeat it during the dull winter months. Vikki and Dave have handed us £156 from this event to go into Wincanton and District current Poppy Appeal.

## Branch AGM 2017

Our branch AGM was held in the Memorial Hall on 12th June with our accounts ratified and committee members elected.

Chairman stated that Poppy Appeal performance was disappointing this year and did not come up to his expectations. In the event our total currently stands at £13,008 which is around £4000 less than last year. We still have money going into the Poppy account from year boxes and sundry donations and we are also fund raising for Poppy Appeal amongst several events - Armed Forces Day being the most prominent and the chairman hoped we will be able to bring the shortfall down to about £3000 less than last year.

Since previous Poppy Appeal Organiser resigned two members volunteered for the role, Dawn Old and Teresa Harper as joint Poppy Appeal Organisers. Chairman's wife Sandra continued as last years Deputy Poppy until formal accreditation of Dawn & Teresa can be completed. Dawn and Teresa will be calling the Poppy Group working together very soon and place an order in July as is the norm. It was asked to be minuted that it was felt that the drop of the Poppy Appeal total was due to organizational issues and not financial irregularities. Branch continued the strong relationship with TS Mantle VC Sea Cadets at RNAS Yeovilton and arranged a Cadet Day at RNAS Yeovilton last year (in fact Poppy Appeal 2016 was launched at the event) The branch have struck new relationships with two youth groups – Templecombe Scouts (our chairman attending their AGM) and Wincanton Fire Service Cadets.

Andy & Steve coordinated a Carol Concert in December when Wincanton Silver Band, Wincanton Youth Theatre and Wincanton Choir gave an excellent evening. It is hoped they will repeat the event this year.

Members also attended the Sea Cadets Carol Concert which was an excellent evening and we are hoping for an invite this year.

Social events continued to be successful, the highlight being the visit to the Houses of Parliament at the invite of David Warburton MP. Branch trips have commenced with a successful trip to Poole recently.

Branch committee recently voted not to charge a branch membership fee surcharge.

The bank account stood at £2870 at the beginning of 2017 and at the time of the AGM was £2953.

Election of the committee members took place and duly elected were Tony Goddard-chairman, Steve Lee-secretary, John Pennington-vice chairman, Andy Chilton-treasurer, Rita Jee-president, Dave Roberts -vice president. Standard bearer-Terry Williams, Deputy Standard bearer-Martin Holmes.

Joint Poppy Appeal Organisers- Dawn Old and Teresa Harper. Tony Goddard will coordinate welfare for the branch.



### Old Faithful Day 2017

The branch continued to pay respects on the anniversary to the crew of the American Flying Fortress "Old Faithful" which

crashed near Snag Farm on 25th June 1944. Last Post was played and the Union Flag and the American flag were carried and wreaths laid. This year Arthur Pickup placed a wreath on behalf of Michael Watts (Michael's father owned Snag Farm at the time) and John Pennington placed a wreath on behalf of the branch.



*We mentioned that our branch allocation of four tickets to the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall on 11th November has to be booked by 1st July. We did have 4 members applying and they have now paid and confirmed. We also have members attending the parade at The Cenotaph next day too.*

### Passchendaele Day 30th July

This is confirming the timings and format of the branch commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele on 30th July.

The Revd. Peter Dixon, Chaplain to 1 Regiment Army Air Corps will be leading our service around the War Memorial and Passchendaele Tree at the Memorial Hall on 30th July. We will assemble at 2.45 p.m. with the service and dedication of the Passchendaele Tree at 3 p.m.

A Royal Marine bugler from RNAS Yeovilton will play Last Post and Reveille and Wincanton Silver Band will lead us with the hymns.

The Revd. Dixon will bless and dedicate the tree at this ceremony. Please do try to come to this poignant ceremony.

### Certificate of Appreciation to TS Mantle VC Sea & Marine Cadets

Over the last several years the Sea and Marine Cadets at our affiliated cadet unit TS Mantle VC have turned out in all weathers to make poppy collections at the November meeting at Wincanton Racecourse and always attend our Remembrance and ceremonial events. In recognition of this Steve Lee and Tony Goddard attended the unit on 27th June to present them with our Certificate of Appreciation. They are a fine group of young people and a great credit to the cadet movement. On average they collect over £1500 at each race meeting, which goes to our Poppy Appeal.



*We have been talking with other branches in South Somerset about the countywide initiative of branch skittles matches. The idea being to hold events at pubs in other branches. Transport there will be provided - full details will be in next Sandbag..*

### Roll of Honour for the War Dead of Two World Wars

Some while ago I applied to have our War Dead of both the First and the Second World Wars included on the national website "Roll of Honour" which is a massive project taking place, to include all the war memorials in the Country. I am pleased to tell you that already all our War Dead of World War Two and to date most of our War Dead of the First World War are on the Roll of Honour, the project to finish all of our named soldiers and sailors of the First World War is well under way and close to finishing.

If you wish to look at the records you can access it by going to [www.roll-of-honour.com](http://www.roll-of-honour.com) and follow the link to Somerset and then Wincanton. I am very impressed with what they have done and I am pleased we have our soldiers, sailors and airmen rightly included on this national tribute. *Tony*

### Social events continue

Our next trip to **Henley on Thames on 15th July** is getting full but at this moment there are seats available. To enable a full day there, we will depart at 8.30 a.m. from the Memorial Hall. Tickets are £12 adults and £6 children as usual. For those who have booked but not paid yet could you please send me your cheque (payable Wincanton RBL).

On **12th August** we go to **Bournemouth** and this will depart at 9 a.m., again it is getting quite full so please let me know if you wish to go.

To enable a summer social event we have booked the Memorial Hall for **19th August** from 3 p.m. until 7 p.m. to enable a BYO (bring your own) picnic and drinks. We have the Sun Lounge booked so if the weather is not good we can go inside.

Members have asked if our proposed trip on **23rd September** could be changed to a seaside trip and asked if we could go to **Lulworth Cove** first and then go on to **Swanage** in the afternoon. This I have done and requested this of South West Coaches. We will leave at 8.30 a.m. which will give us time to do both.

A discussion on our last trip prompted the question of us going to visit Cardiff for the tour of the Royal Mint (and option of being dropped in central Cardiff if requested.). Yes it is viable and I will give a date and details in our next Sandbag.

October is also the month for our **Annual Dinner**, which is on **Friday 6th October**, so please note in your diary.