



"SANDBAG"
WINCANTON AND DISTRICT
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER
Editor Tony Goddard 01963-824193

NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

Volume 8 Issue 6

Branch secretary Arthur Pickup 01963-32952

July 2011

Next branch meeting 15h August - 7 p.m.

Branch Union Flag

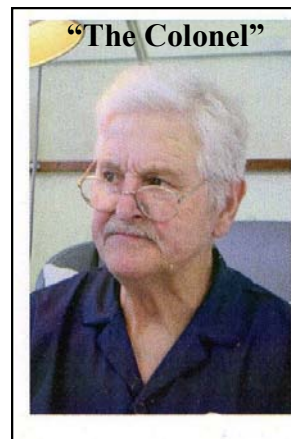
It was agreed at the July branch meeting that quotes be sought for a new branch Union Flag and that this be dedicated during the RBL 90th Anniversary. Quotes vary around £250 which is for the example shown in the picture. The flag comes with a ceremonial pole and base and can not only be used for parades but for meetings and dinners etc. Several members indicated they would like to donate towards the flag and we agreed to hold fundraising events to ensure we have a suitable flag for our next Remembrance Parade.



Passing of two loyal members

During the last month we sadly lost two loyal members.

Leonard Bargery, affectionately known to many people as **the "Colonel"** passed away on 29th June after a long illness. It is hard to now know who christened Leonard "the Colonel" but it was a name that has stuck for many years. In reality he served his National Service in the Royal Air Force and then went on to establish his decorating and minor repairs business he did for most of his working life. No, he did not ever achieve the "high rank" we all knew him by. He was such a colourful character and was known throughout the town for his mischievous wit and liking for a good laugh. He will be sadly missed.



Robert Farnworth passed away suddenly on 12th June and up till then was enjoying life until heart failure claimed him. Bob served as a Petty Officer (Radio Mechanic) for some of that time on his favourite ship HMS Caprice. He left the Navy to pursue a career in local government eventually retiring as a Chief Environmental Health and Housing Officer. We shall miss Bob as he attended several branch meetings and Coffee Morning until recently.

Veterans badges

Many of our members already proudly wear a Veterans Badge and both the Government and the Royal British Legion are keen that veterans are recognised. The criteria is that all who served in HM Armed Forces and The Reserve Forces are entitled to wear the Veterans Badge and this can be obtained by completing a simple form either obtained online from www.veterans-uk.info or by freephone 0800 169 2277. It is also possible to obtain a form by writing to:- Service Personnel & Veterans Agency, Norcross, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 3WP



Welcome new members

During the last month two new members, both ex-service joined our branch. **Bob Ridout** served in the Royal Navy and **Les Crompton** the 15th/19th Hussars.

As mentioned at the recent branch meeting the National RBL Conference agreed to a £1 annual increase of membership fee, effective next October and the an annual increase of £1 for another 5 years. A new style membership card will also be issued.

The new memorial at Snag Farm

We certainly had an excellent day on 25th June when we commemorated the fatal crash of "Old Faithful" the USAAF Flying Fortress this year. Our Coffee Morning was a great success and £140 was raised for branch funds. Thanks to Steve Lee and Michael Watts an interesting exhibition was put on and I printed off several off Joe Harlick's photos which he had given us. Being a Saturday we enjoyed the cooperation of the police in controlling the traffic at Bayford Hill whilst prayers were said by our chaplain Rev. Nigel Feaver and wreaths laid. It was good to have the transport from the Memorial Hall to Bayford which enabled members to break off from the Coffee Morning and return afterwards. It was very nice to have with us Ann Funk, 2nd Lt. Mikonis's sister and her daughter Tara Funk Grim who had both travelled over from the United States. After a rapid turn round we all then went to Snag Farm for the unveiling at 3 p.m., which was the approximate time Old Faithful crashed. What an amazing situation then ensued because Piers and Alison Ostroumoff who now own Snag Farm had thought of everything. The propeller was in place and the memorial plaque fitted to the wall. A bonus for us was that Air Vice-Marshal Sir John Severne was able to attend and we were most grateful. I am sure members will remember that Sir John was one of the guests of honour at our 2004 commemoration and that at the time he was Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Somerset when he attended along with Lady Gass, the Lord Lieutenant. Luckily for us too was that Elaine Rodgers told us at Coffee Morning that she would be very happy to play the Last Post in the afternoon and this she did splendidly. There was a minor "glitch" when the American flag stubbornly would not be removed but the prevailing wind did help us and the unveiling went off fine, with Ann Funk, Tara Grim and our mayor Colin Winder doing the honours. It was nice too that our last mayor Cllr. Richard D'Arcy and his wife Gill were able to attend. After the ceremony Piers and Alison gave us all a wonderful cream tea and in the warm sunshine we all had an excellent time. Piers and Alison offered us the use of their barn for future functions and we hope to follow up with this later in the summer with a social event. On Sunday 26th June Stoke Trister Parish Church held an Evensong in honour of the crew of Old Faithful and all who attended remarked how moving it was.



At Bayford Hill



Dedicating the new memorial at Snag Farm

I did commit myself at the event to ensuring that the 70th anniversary in 2014 will take place in appropriate style and I will again coordinate this, all being well ! Let us all remember the sacrifice made by those nine brave airmen in Old Faithful and hope that their memory will endure in Wincanton for a long time ahead.



Michael Watts and the new memorial

War Dead of the Great War

I have not mentioned much about the subject lately but I am still actively pursuing the stories of our War Dead of the Great War. Unfortunately I have found that all are beyond not only living memory and even their immediate relatives now living know little of them. Sadly I have told family members things they did not themselves know about their relatives. It is my intention to complete the book "Wincanton - Our War Dead of the Great War" during the 90th anniversary year of the Royal British Legion and all the proceeds of the book will go to Poppy Appeal 2011/12 (anniversary year). What really saddens me is that I do not have photographs some of the men in question and I believe that their stories if it is not accomplished now they never will and I say that very sincerely.

One such person I would dearly like to know about is Ernest Hinks because sadly his Commonwealth War Graves (CWG) record is incorrect. I contacted not only the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich but also the World Ship Society (WSA) who hold records of the Merchant Navy and I kept drawing a blank until a very astute researcher at the WSA agreed to check all collisions at sea on day Ernest died. The CWG show Ernest as having been lost at sea aboard the "S.S. Dianiard" - a very unusual name. No such ship existed on any records until we found that the "S.S. Diamond" sank on the day Ernest was lost and in fact it was on the "Diamond" he went down. Here is his story, such as I have at the moment.

His father John Clifford Hinks and mother Laura Mary were general drapers, costumier, dress maker, milliner, tailor and outfitters running a store at 9 Market Place, Wincanton where Ernest was born on September 1895. He had two sisters Doris Mary and Hilda Muriel.

Ernest enlisted in Bristol on 12th November 1915 with his friend Harry Hamblin (Harry's service number was BZ/1343 one after Ernest's) and as fate would have it both would not survive the war.

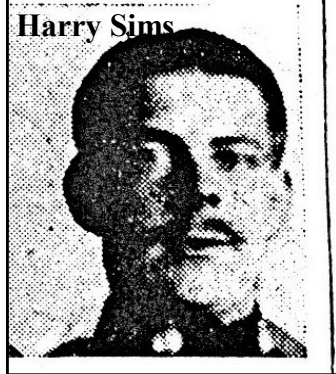
Ernest qualified as an artificer engineer and had previously been onboard a ship when it was torpedoed in the Mediterranean but he survived. Then on 13th April 1918 he was onboard the S.S. Diamond which was travelling from Londonderry to Glasgow with a cargo of steel plates. No logical explanation can be given as to why Ernest Hinks was onboard a merchant ship as the S.S. Diamond was not under Admiralty jurisdiction. It is speculation but he may possibly have been hitching a ride back to the mainland and that he may have been on leave from a Navy unit in Ireland. The S.S. Diamond was steaming without lights (under wartime restrictions) when as it was just off Rathlin Island one mile northwest of Altacarry Lighthouse overlooking the Mull of Kintyre. In the same position was the S.S. Lily which was also steaming without lights and both ships collided. The S.S. Diamond sank immediately and ten of the crew were picked up by the "Lily" three of those on "Diamond" were lost one, of those was Ernest Hinks and his body was never found. Legend has it that one of those who died was Patrick O'Dornan, it was his 25th birthday and he went below to retrieve his suit. Ernest Hinks has no grave but the sea and is commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial face 29.

If anyone knows the relatives of the Hinks family or can think of anything that will help solve the mystery, I would be most grateful.

Another mystery is Herbert (Harry) Sims, I have slightly more on Harry but there again his story is slightly incomplete.

Harry as he was known in the family was born in Milborne Port in 1891. He was the son of John and Elizabeth Sims, his father John was a farm worker. Harry had three brothers, William, Samuel and Frederick and two sisters Flossie and Elsie. The family moved around due John Sims work on the farms living several times in Milborne Port but also Stoke under Ham and Bayford, moving to 3 Whitehall Cottages shortly after Elsie was born. Harry also worked on the farms as did his brother William upon leaving school, Harry working as a carter with Mr. Goddard at Church Farm Charlton Musgrove. Harry's mother died at the age of 43 in March 1911. Harry married Elsie Ann Oborn in Wincanton Parish Church on 13th October 1912. He joined the regular Army enlisting in the 5th Dragoon Guards at Taunton in 1913 - the same regiment as his neighbour Charlie Lodge. Harry served in the regiment during their famous action at Nery on 1st September 1914, at which Charlie Lodge was killed. Fortunately I have a very full story of Charlie Lodge, a true English hero. On 1st May 1915 the Regiment was billeted in the neighbourhood of Eecke and Caestre near Ypres and Harry and the soldiers were put to work on a railway line near the Lille Gate at Ypres. Work on the railway continued until 7th May and no action was seen. The 5th Dragoons were ordered to rapidly move out dismounted on 9th May and were dispersed amongst farms and a chateau half way between Vlamertinghe and Ypres ... PTO

until on 10th May they were amongst the regiments who relieved the 2nd Brigade in trenches. On 12th May 5th Dragoons moved out and occupied trenches along with other Cavalry regiments to the south and remained in dugouts all day. The trenches were in a bad condition and at night they attempted to repair and improve the parapets and support trenches. There was no wire in front of them, no support trenches and no communication trenches. The country in front of them was open and exposed. At 4 a.m. on 13th May the Germans commenced a bombardment of the whole line occupied by the Cavalry which lasted most of the day and casualties were heavy. By the end of the day 5th Dragoons had lost 29 soldiers killed and 73 wounded. Harry was amongst those who died that day a casualty of enemy artillery shelling and his body was never found. He was 24 years old. Both of Harry's brothers were in the Army, William with the Welsh Guards and Samuel who was barely 18 had been taken prisoner of war at the Battle of Mons.



Harry George Sims is commemorated on the memorial to the missing at the Menin Gate in Ypres – panel 5. I would dearly like to make contact with any of Harry's relatives.

Others that are even more of a mystery are :- Stephen Grey Parsons, none of the Parsons in Wincanton I have contacted know of him. Reginald Hill of South Street nothing much is known of him. Frank Francis, whose father ran the "beer house" which is now the Millers Inn is also on my list.

Next month I will publish a full list of all my "mysteries" and hope someone can help before I close the book..

Events

20th August Lulworth Cove & Swanage

We will leave the Memorial Hall at 9 a.m. and be home around 5.30 p.m. We will go first to Lulworth Cove arriving around 10.a.m (ish) have time for coffee and a stroll then on to Swanage around 1 p.m. For the full afternoon. Please let me as soon as possible if you wish to go. Cost is £10 each and children under 15 are £5.

Reminder

As well as our monthly trips I would just like to remind you that our Annual Dinner date is set for **14th October**. I am in the final stages of booking a venue which I will announce next month. As it was so successful last year that we included transport there and back, this will be included in the price and then there is no worry about having a glass of wine (or two) and driving. Full details next month. I have been asked by a couple of people to remind them of the date of the pre Christmas lunch and Poinsettia Trail at Ottery St. Mary. This is in fact **19th December**.

DVDs for sale

John Spragg has compiled a DVD of the unveiling of the new Old Faithful memorial cost £5 each. John has kindly agreed to donate the proceeds to the current Poppy Appeal. He has also made a DVD of the 1994 ceremony which is historically very interesting this is also £5. Please contact me if you wish to have a DVD. Tony

Ken Dominey has composed this moving poem which I thought you would like to read:-

Wootton Bassett

Oh gentle, leafy Wiltshire town
Proud sentinel of care
Selfless in your sorrow
Voicing our despair
Sharing the mourning burden
Unified in the loss
Of someone's precious loved one
Now sleeping 'neath a cross.
Dignified in homage
Silent in the street
All ages stand in unity
Our Fallen sons to greet,
We thank you for the tears you shed,
We thank you for your flowers
To rest in peaceful bowers
And when your final cortege passed
With thoughts, emotions, mixed,
We thank you for your memories
That had the world transfixed.
Our Island Race depicted
Devoted, staunch and loyal
With gratitude we salute you,
Wootton Bassett, Royal.

Ken Dominey