



"SANDBAG"

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

Editor Tony Goddard 01963-824193



NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

Volume 8 Issue 10

Branch secretary Arthur Pickup 01963-32952

November
2011

No branch meeting in December due Ottery trip, next meeting 16th January 2012

War Memorial gets its sword

It was the intention of the original War Memorial committee to have an Excalibur sword on the memorial of the type seen on all British War Cemeteries. When we requested the stonemason to carve the sword we were told it was impossible in the soft material of the memorial but he could carve a sword of a different type on it. We all opted for the alternative but when the memorial was delivered the sword hilt came away on delivery, it was repaired but once frost got into it, it came away several times more and it was decided to leave it as it was because it did not really notice. When we went to the unveiling of the new "Old Faithful" memorial at Snag Farm in the summer, Piers Ostroumoff (who is a blacksmith) told us how he could make an Excalibur sword in either bronze or resin. We decided on resin as bronze is vulnerable nowadays and commissioned him to make it. I am very pleased to say the new Excalibur is now in the process of being installed. Below is shown Piers starting removing the old sword and the new sword should be in place for 11th November.



No branch meeting in December due visit to Ottery St. Mary

Our pre-Christmas lunch and visit to Ottery Garden Centre is on 19th December and this would have been a branch meeting evening. As most members will be on this visit it has been decided not to hold a branch meeting in December. The next scheduled meeting will be on 16th January BUT if the weather is bad (icy or snowing) as it was last year please check with Arthur if that is taking place. We do not want to risk members coming out if the weather is too bad.

The visit to Ottery is currently full and all those who applied to go have been accommodated. If you wish to have your name on a standby list please let me or Arthur know.

Timings are :- Leave Wincanton Memorial Hall at 9 a.m. going directly to Ottery where we should arrive around 10.15 a.m. with time for a coffee/tea break before taking the "Behind the scenes tour". Lunch is around mid-day and our departure time will be agreed on the journey down. If there is time permitting and the weather is good we could stop at Sidmouth on the way back (this will be decided on the day). Members have prepaid the coach, but the lunch cost will be taken in the restaurant.

2011/12 Poppy Appeal is looking good !

At the time of going to print we are still collecting for Poppy Appeal but early indications are that we are well on track to exceed our £13000 total last year. A very good sign is that collecting tins are very heavy and reports are that the public have been generous with paper money. On 29th October we launched the Appeal with major events, the Coffee Morning, Exhibition and Wincanton Silver Band Concert, I am very pleased to say that the whole day raised over £1000 for Poppy Appeal (see centre pages for full coverage). Arthur and I intend to hold fundraising events throughout the collection year and will update everyone once details are known.

Remembrance Time 2011

Poppy Appeal and Remembrance time 2011 got off to an excellent start on Saturday 29th October. Our Coffee Morning was extremely well supported with an estimated 70 people attending. Steve Lee and Roy Glennister held an exhibition of local people involved in famous actions, highlighting Charlie Lodge who was at the famous "Incident at Nery" when the old regular army of 1914 clashed with the Germans north of the River Marne on 1st September 1914. Charlie was killed in the action involving the charge of the 5th Dragoon Guards at the small village of Nery, later in that day L Battery Royal Horse Artillery undertook their famous action "firing 'til the last gun" and three Victoria Crosses were awarded. During the Second World War, Yeoman of Signals Harry Atkins was beside Commander Gerard Roop VC when both were killed during the epic action of the ramming of the German battleship Hipper by the HMS Glowworm. Another Wincanton man, Gerald Cronin was killed in the action at Passchendael when Thomas Sage of the 8th Bn. Somerset Light Infantry won another Victoria Cross. Our exhibition was also supplemented with a diorama of a battle scene of the First World War and along with it were battlefield artifacts found in Flanders, Loos and the Somme. Items included a shell case recovered at Leipzig Redoubt, British and German bullet heads, shrapnel balls and even pieces of German beer bottles.



The evening was absolutely fantastic when a Gala Concert was given by Wincanton Silver Band, the band's new conductor, David Bertie, was with the band for the first time. David, who was an army musician presented the concert which covered music from the 90 years of the Royal British Legion—including the Royal British Legion March. There were lots of nostalgic songs including White Cliffs of Dover and We'll Meet Again and the finale included that lovely patriotic hymn I Vow to Thee My Country followed by the Last Post when Ray Whitehead brought in our new Union Flag and dipped it for the Last Post.

Everyone present agreed it was an exceptional evening.

We raised well over £1000 for Poppy Appeal over the whole day, which was an excellent start.

Don't forget the band have a Christmas Concert on 18th December which should be another great evening.



The Last Post with Ray Whitehead



David Bertie & Wincanton Silver Band

Chairman's AGM report 2011

Wincanton branch continues to thrive and we have had another very successful year.

Poppy Appeal 2010/11 closed with another record year of over £13000 and we were very grateful to John Pennington for stepping in as temporary Poppy Appeal Coordinator last November. Arthur Pickup took over at the branch AGM and received an excellent handover from John. It was also at the AGM that Arthur took on the branch secretary role and he has achieved a remarkable first year for which I know every member is grateful.

At the County of Somerset Conference in January, Wincanton again won the Colin McKenzie Cup for the most efficient branch in the county with under 500 members. This is the fourth consecutive year, the record is five years so let go for it ! Four branch officials attended the County Conference and accepted the award. We continue to be high profile in the community and enjoy a very good relationship with the press, particularly the Western Gazette who have been very supportive. Throughout the year the Western Gazette, The Visitor Magazine and the Blackmore Magazine have all given us very positive coverage. In fact our fame spread to Northern France when we accepted an invitation from French veterans near Boulogne to attend their Liberation Day commemoration and pay respects to our member Jean Pipe's father who is buried in the small village of Pernes Lez Boulogne. Newspapers in northern France gave us extensive coverage with very complimentary articles. Poppies have been supplied this year to the school children of the village and Ron Peet and I gave them a lesson, through an interpreter about the meaning of the wearing of the Poppy. Also fresh wreaths have been left for the French village war memorial and the graves of the British soldiers buried there to be placed on Remembrance Day. Pilgrimages and laying of wreaths on the battlefields continue and all the Wincanton War Dead of the Great War in France & Belgium have had fresh wreaths laid at one time this year. Amazingly a Poppy Appeal box that was left in Flanders had over 40 Euros inside upon our return. We also arranged for Wincanton locals Chris and Doug Louth to lay our tributes at the memorial in Poland to the RAF victims of the Nazis who took part in the Great Escape.

Our commitment to youth has continued this year and culminated in King Arthur's Community School being awarded our Certificate of Appreciation for their efforts and commitments during Remembrance Time. We are also very pleased they have put forward two students to become our first youth members who will take part in our activities throughout this year. Our affiliated ACF unit supplied the Standard Bearer for the Union Flag last year and will continue to do so this year. We continue to have a representative on the civilian board of our ATC unit and very glad to hear that recruiting is well under way and numbers have increased dramatically. We also intend making another youth group affiliated this year and hope to make an announcement shortly.

We were very pleased to have been invited to the Royal Artillery unit at Thorney Island last April and greatly enjoyed the visit and their hospitality. It was also good to re-establish contact with Lt.Col. Lucy Giles and her husband Nick and we were very pleased she was able to accept our invitation as a guest of honour at the branch dinner. We also visited our adopted unit the Commando Helicopter Force at RNAS Yeovilton during the past year and are pleased and honoured that they are continuing our close relationship.

Branch members assisted at the Legion stand at the Bath & West Show in the summer not only representing the branch but having a good (if tiring) day at show.

We also had a good size group who accepted the invitation to visit the Hall & Woodhouse Brewery in Blandford and enjoyed a very interesting and pleasant visit.

Our initiative to have one day trip each month succeeded and had highlights such as Kew Gardens, lunch at the new Otter Nursery, Lulworth Cove & Swanage, Bournemouth and Exmouth amongst others. We also had a group attend the Colston Hall Festival of Remembrance this year, which was a first for the branch. My attempt to keep the price at £10 succeeded and we will attempt to peg the price at £10 again in the coming year. Already an interesting programme of events is taking shape for the coming year.

Our longstanding wish to have the sword replaced on the War Memorial is taking shape and will be in place for 11th November. Piers Ostroumoff is making the sword and it was Piers who invited us to erect a plaque to "Old Faithful" at his home – Snag Farm.

Finally in the 90th Anniversary year we decided to purchase a new Union Flag, this was done entirely from donations of members and will be paraded for the first time on 11th November. Thanks to all donors. *Tony*

<p style="text-align: center;">Welcome new members</p> <p>We welcome two new members, Trevor Richadom and Evelyn Mant who joined this month.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Possible events 2012</p> <p>After our visit to Ottery we will take a break from our trips until the Spring but first intended trip will be a visit to Bridport Market in the morning and then continue on to West Bay about 1 p.m. This will be something to look forward during the long winter nights !</p> <p>It was last March that we had lunch at the Otter Garden Centre in Wincanton and it was very successful. I have been asked been asked to arrange another lunch this year and I will make this for the last week in March. Again we can bring our own wine and we will have a two course meal.</p> <p>As those who were present at the unveiling of the new "Old Faithful" Memorial at Snag Farm will remember we were invited back to Snag Farm to hold a party or Barn Dance in Pier's and Alison's barn. This possibly will take place during May and will be in aid of Poppy Appeal 2011/12.</p> <p>Again we will have one trip each month and I have several new ideas for next year including visits to Southampton, New Forrest, Cardiff, Portsmouth and maybe Ross on Wye. Watch this space for firm information. With your cooperation and taking part in trips I will still attempt to keep the cost at £10 each person each trip.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Commando Helicopter Force at Christmas</p> <p>Last year our sister organisation "Wincanton Supports Our Troops" sent a cheque to help pay for the Commando Helicopter Force Christmas Party in Afghanistan. Declan Farrell also baked a large supply of Christmas cakes which were sent out. We have again decided to do the same and Declan has again been baking ! We have also got together another £1000 and Declan will hand this over on our behalf with his cakes during December. Feedback we have been given from the CHF indicates they are very well received.</p> <p>On 2nd November Karen Dunsford held a bingo for the troops and she raised £151.60 which is most gratefully received. Thanks Karen.</p> <p>Thanks also to Brian Sweet who has been selling books throughout the summer. Well done Brian. I know our thoughts go out to our Armed Forces at this time of year and we are very pleased to be able to make this gesture of support.</p> <p>Those who came to the branch Dinner will remember that Lucy Giles asked if anyone has packs of pens, pencils and school supplies which could be sent to the school children in Afghanistan. Members have started handing over these but if anyone has any more we do need them before Christmas as Lucy's husband Nick will coordinate getting them to Afghanistan when he is on Christmas leave. Either I or Arthur or for that matter any branch official can receive them and we will ensure Nick has them in time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bruton branch Christmas Special 11th December</p> <p>On Sunday 11th December Bruton branch will be having a Christmas Carvery Lunch and visit to the Octagon Theatre Yeovil for Seasonal Music and Song performed by the Salvation Army. Cost is £20 person for the lunch and the theatre.</p> <p>To book or get more information contact Lynne Hawkridge on 01749-812916.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Winter Sandbag</p> <p>As we did last year, there will be a joint January/February issue of Sandbag and the December Sandbag will probably be issued just after Christmas.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Always remember this !</p> <p>A couple of years ago I quoted this, it is so true I wanted to say it again, especially at Remembrance Time.</p> <p><i>"It is the soldier, not the reporter, Who has given us freedom of the press.</i></p> <p><i>It is the soldier, not the poet, Who has given us freedom of speech.</i></p> <p><i>It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, Who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.</i></p> <p><i>It is the soldier, Who salutes the flag, Who serves beneath the flag, And whose coffin is draped by the flag, Who allows the protester to burn the flag."</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">City of Bristol & County of Somerset Festival of Remembrance 5th November</p> <p>The branch achieved a "first" this year when 16 members attended the Festival of Remembrance in Bristol an excellent day was had by all.</p>	