



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

NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

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Branch secretary Arthur Pickup 01963-32952

**April
2013**

Next branch meeting 20th May at 7 p.m.

**A WARM WELCOME TO CASTLE CARY
RBL.**

A warm welcome is extended from the Wincanton Branch of the Royal British Legion to our recent additional members from the Castle Cary Branch. Castle Cary has joined Wincanton as a Sub Branch and it will remain under Wincanton's wing until it can find new officers to run the branch.

In May 2009 the Rev Alan Bond who was the branch Membership secretary, died. 2012 David Dilnot who was the branch Secretary, died. Both Alan and David were also a well respected members of the community and very active in the Legion. Following David's death the PAO Ruth Buckmaster retired. The group having lost three key members, was in a desperate position. It was feared that poppy sales and the remembrance parade in Castle Cary could become a thing of the past. However it overcome it's immediate problems by becoming a partner with Wincanton Branch. We would like to thank all the kind people of Castle Cary who donated generously this year. Also we must give many thanks for the help given by a few long standing supporters this year who distributed the Poppies throughout the town. The supporters included:- Colin Biddiscombe, Ann Brittain, Rachel Fairing, and Ann Webster. Ann Brittain managed to collect £923 on the high street during 2 weeks in November. Colin Biddiscombe also spent two weeks on the high street playing his gramophone and doing Elvis impersonations. With the support of Edward Thring the branch president, local organisations and cadets the parade on the 11th November made it a great success. The memorials in both Cary and Ansford were well decorated with wreaths. This year we are looking for a couple of new supporters to carry on the good work. One lady (Liz Stokes) has already come

forward. So anyone else out there who would like to help, please contact Sue Potepa County Poppy Appeal Org (telephone 07768794939). Remember that the need for a service record has long gone. We need only that you are keen to help the cause of the Legion.

I would also like to thank Arthur Pickup, our secretary for stepping in at the last moment organising Poppy Appeal items and visiting Castle Cary on many occasions drumming up support.

Tony Goddard, Wincanton Branch Chairman.

Poppy Appeal

Money still keeps coming in, Arthur tells me the branch Poppy Appeal total now stands at **£11527**

American Flag

When we commemorate the "Old Faithful" anniversary each year we normally parade an American flag. To be honest it is my flag and rather faded. I told a friend in South Carolina the story of "Old Faithful" and I explained my dilemma - my friend is an official of his local veterans group. I am pleased to tell you as a gesture of friendship that the veterans in South Carolina have decided to donate to us a proper parade standard for our use and as acknowledgment of their gratitude that we are remembering the sacrifice of the American airmen.

Monthly meetings

We discussed at the March branch meeting the possibility of changing branch meetings to every other month. There appeared to be broad support for this idea but it would seem sensible to make the change after the branch AGM in November. In any event Sandbag will remain being published on a monthly basis except when I am unable to do so due to annual holiday.

First youth member—Brecon Lee

Brecon, Steve Lee's son became the first youth member of Wincanton RBL. Brecon is 13 years old which is the minimum age to join and became eligible recently. To commemorate the occasion I presented Brecon with a certificate and his Legion badge at the Boys Day Out" on 23rd March when we visited the Tank Museum, Bovington. Our visit was excellent and because there was not enough for the usual coach, members travelled in cars. We last visited the Tank Museum in April 2009 and much has changed since then. Several new exhibits are displayed, the new Kuwait Arena is almost finished and a



major enhancement

features trench life in the Great War—this is very timely as next year it will bring much interest during the centenary commemorations. When we last visited the Tank Museum we had with us member Paddy Fox, who is a Chelsea Pensioner. It was a pity Paddy was not able to attend this time as we were reminded of him upon leaving the museum when we saw the exit sign thanking people for visiting the museum. Paddy seems to be everywhere as the museum had included a picture of Paddy taken by his armoured car on the last visit (see photo left !!) It is nice to see a Wincanton Legion member's photo displayed so prominently.

ROYAL NAVY 'JUNGLIES' RE-TRACE THEIR ROOTS IN MALAYSIA

17 members of 845 Naval Air Squadron (NAS) have returned to their base at RNAS Yeovilton after an exhilarating 12 day trip to Malaysia. The aim of the visit was to retrace the footsteps of their former comrades and to honour those heroic individuals who gave their lives in this distant part of the world during the incursion of Communist forces from Indonesia in the early 1960s. The team were joined by former naval aviators, Lt Neil Burns-Thomson RN (Rtd) (74) from Bungay, Suffolk and Lt Mike Thompson RN (Rtd) (71) both veteran 'Junglie' pilots were survivors of helicopter crashes in the hazardous jungle environment. Neil's scariest moment was when his Whirlwind helicopter crashed in 1965, "There were six of us onboard at the time and we all survived," Neil recalled, "and that is why the indigenous Iban people named me 'Antu Gayo Ulu Mirana' - Long Lived Spirit of the River and the troops on the ground called us 'Junglies'." Mike was also extremely lucky as he was the only survivor of a Wessex helicopter that crashed.

Soon after arriving the team were invited to the home of the local MP Alex Linggi who had grown up in Nanga Ga'at and reminisced about actually witnessing a mid-air collision of an 845 NAS Wessex helicopter. Welcoming the team the MP added, "Your visit is significant because this year Sarawak is celebrating the 50th anniversary of Malaysia. Words are not enough to describe how much 845 Naval Air Squadron has done for us in Kapit and Sarawak." The third veteran, Cyril Goodhand served with 42 Cdo during the insurgency. For seasoned and less experienced personnel it was marvellous to have the veterans along. Each added a dimension to the visit and revealed personal insights into the squadron's 'Junglie' heritage and the immense contribution also made by the Royal Marines during the conflict.

Lt Aaron Cross laid a wreath at the Nanga Ga'at memorial to their Junglie' forbearers accompanied by the British veterans, a group of Malaysian military veterans and VIPs. It was then announced by Alex Linggi MP that a Government In 1962 communist insurgents had kidnapped the British Empire Representative and his family. Royal Marines from 42 Commando were sent to rescue them. The raid was successful with all hostages released unhurt however five Royal Marines lost their lives. grant of £2000 had been allocated to maintain the memorial.

Major Mark Johnson RM, Senior Pilot 845 Sqn, laid a wreath on behalf of 845 NAS, the 'Junglie' Association, and the FAA Memorial Church at the Memorial in Limbang town which was dedicated to those that died.

Borneo is renowned for the hospitality of its and after a visit to a local school where the team helped renovate a classroom and they received an invitation to visit a local Longhouse. Each house accommodates 50 families and the welcome ceremony required all assembled visitors to meet each family member. To witness many generations living together so harmoniously was an inspirational experience for the visitors and it was very apparent how much the Iban people appreciated the work of the British during the conflict. The sailors, airmen, and veterans were the honoured guests at a welcome feast; a wild boar was killed in honour of the occasion and was washed down with copious amounts of the local 'home brew' or Tuac. Traditional Sarawak songs followed in which the Ibans praised the strength of the veterans on the battlefield and the visit to their country. Major Johnson took part in a ritual involving the cutting down of gifts with a Parang; a traditional tribal blade used as a weapon and tool by the Iban people. It was very apparent that both guests and Ibans had become close friends. The following day the team visited



Members of 845 Squadron NAS at Naga Ga'at Memorial

the local hospital where they were greeted by Doctors and nurses. During a tour of the paediatrics ward the visitors were invited to talk with the children and their parents. On completion Lt Fred Durrant gave a brief on the Squadron's Team Medics training and how casualties are treated on the battlefield. The group were then hosted to a lunch with local dignitaries and each was presented with a Parang.

Whilst the visit to Malaysia was significant in terms of understanding the Squadron's history, it was also time to participate in some adventurous training. Part of the group departed to Sibul to undertake scuba diving.

The Sibul marine national park has a number of dive sites offering a host of wildlife from Blue Spotted Ray, to turtles, barracuda, and sting ray. From novices to qualified divers, all benefited from the opportunity to dive in an amazing environment.

Meanwhile the remainder of the group took 2 days out to climb Mount Kinabalu. Aided by local guides. They quickly realised they had somewhat underestimated the arduous task that lay ahead. After hours of 'yomping' they arrived at base camp with aching legs and feet. The following day was an early morning start and the team finally arrived as the sun rose over the peak.

On the final day the group reflected on their experience agreeing their appreciation of the endeavours of the veterans, the wonderful Malaysian friends they had made the benefits of life within the Royal Navy and the sponsorship provided by the Fly Navy Heritage trust. It was a truly an incredible journey.

Lt. Cdr. Rob Stephens RN (Rtd) Commando Helicopter Force

More trips details

There are still a few places available on the Sidmouth trip (details in Sandbag last month) which is on **27th April**. If you wish to go please contact me urgently.

The list is also now open for the trip to Bucklars Hard (also in Sandbag last month & opposite) on 18th May. We have now set dates to the more trips throughout the summer which are as follows :-

22nd June Dunster & Minehead.

We will leave the Memorial Hall at 9 a.m. and go directly to Dunster. Here we have a choice, those who wish can either stay in Dunster all day and be picked up on our return home or get the steam train from Dunster to Minehead and rejoin the coach in Minehead. Those who do not wish to get off at Dunster but prefer to go direct to Minehead may also do so. We will check on the coach if anyone does want to continue on to Minehead straightaway as if everyone would like to get off at Dunster and all continue to Minehead later we can also do that (that is a decision on the day). As we all know Dunster is a charming small town with lots of cosy restaurants and nice small shops. Dunster also boasts a fine castle which for those who are members of the National Trust, entry would be free. It could be that we make a longer stop at Dunster and a short while at Minehead.

20th July Gloucester.

We will leave the Memorial Hall at 8.30 a.m. as there is lots to see in Gloucester and we will need that extra half hour. There will be a comfort stop on the way and we will also have the opportunity for those who wish to stop at the Gloucester Quays outlet shopping area. The coach will take us to the square near the Waterways Museum which will give us easy access to a trip on the river or a short walk to Gloucester Cathedral. It is also very close to the main shopping area, restaurants and historic streets. As explained last month, I do need to keep the cost at £12 as coach costs have risen with fuel prices.

24th August London.

We are in the early stages of planning this trip to London but it is emerging that several possibilities will be available for an excellent day out. The coach will drop us off at the London Eye where we can take a boat trip to the Tower of London where it is possible to visit HMS Belfast. Ray Whitehead served on the ship and is a member of the Belfast Association. Ray says he is willing to accompany some members on a personalised tour. Of course with a visit to London there are endless possibilities for individual choices, as the London Eye is very central some people may wish to take the underground nearby for shopping or sightseeing. The area of the South Bank is also nice in summer so the choice is yours.

Coffee Morning 25th May

The next branch Coffee Morning is on 25th May as usual in the Memorial Hall at 10 a.m. until noon.

Dates for your diary

23rd June Veterans Parade at Weymouth.

Assembly 10 a.m.—10.30 a.m. at the Esplanade Bus service from Lodmoor Car Park 9 a.m. until 10.20 a.m.

29th June The Rifles receive the Freedom of Lyme Regis.

7th July Fovant Badges Memorial Service starts at 2.15 p.m.

Good Golf Day out !!!

On 3rd May Poppy Appeal Somerset are holding a Charity Golf Day at Worely Golf Club, Weston Super Mare from 8 a.m. until 3.45 p.m. Entry includes buffet lunch. Contact Sue Potepa on 07768794939 for full details.

Armed Forces Day 29th June update

I am very pleased to let you know that on Armed Forces Day, Saturday 29th June, Wincanton Silver Band have agreed to play for us in the marquee during the afternoon. This is in addition to the evening of song which will be performed by Yeovil singer Sarah Lowery. Dave tells me he has also booked a singer to take over from Sarah at 9 p.m. making it a full fun packed day. During the daytime there will be a barbecue, bouncy castle, craft stalls, skittles competition, cake stall, and lots of fun attractions. We have decided to have a used book stall amongst the stalls during the day, if anyone has good used books please let me know. Tea, coffee and all licensed refreshments will be available. We hope to have military representation too. It all sounds like a very good day shaping up ! More details as they come in. Location Millers' Inn, Silver Street.

Bucklars Hard

All is now confirmed. Depart Memorial Hall at 8.30 am on **Saturday 18th May**. Stop at Lyndhurst in the New Forrest for coffee break then continue on to Bucklars Hard for the rest of the day. Tickets £12 (Juniors £6).