



# "SANDBAG"

## WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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### NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

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Next branch meeting 21st September at 7 p.m. in Millers Inn



#### Commandant's Parade 5th August Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

The coach for the the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst visit on 5th August coach will be completely full. We will depart from the Memorial Hall Wincanton very punctually at 7.30 a.m. please ensure you are there by 7.20 a.m. as we



cannot wait and there will be rush hour traffic on M3. The following is the plan for the day :- Arrive at Sandhurst by 9.30 a.m. for 9.45 a.m. and coffee in the Officer's Mess. All must be seated for the parade by 10.40 a.m. Lunch in the Officer's Mess at 12 noon. Then a tour of the Old College at 2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. Refreshments at Chapel Square 3.30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Depart for home at 4 p.m. arriving in Wincanton around 5.30p.m. Please note that dress is formal for the parade and male attire is preferably a suit, but blazer and tie is acceptable. Ladies attire should be similarly smart.

#### VJ Day 75th anniversary events

Wincanton Town Council are organising events for the 70th anniversary of VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day) and Councillor Dawn Old is coordinating. The actual anniversary is 14th August but the Nation will be observing the event on Saturday 15th August and over the period Dawn tells me there will be many events taking place in the town.

On Tuesday 11th August will be a flag making workshop between 10 a.m. & 1 p.m. and then 2 until 4 p.m. Friday evening there will be a 1940s Dance in Wincanton Memorial Hall. Tickets are £10 (children free and welcome) There will be a licensed bar and food will be available. On Saturday 15th August the Parish Church bells will ring from 10.30 to 11 a.m. and at 11 a.m. Silence at the War Memorial at Memorial Hall. If they can get enough people to parade then will then a Thanksgiving Service at the Parish Church will take place. As it holiday season and it may not be possible to get enough to attend a parade then the Silence and service will be held at the War Memorial at 2 p.m. that day.

There will be cream tea in the afternoon at 2.30 p.m. - all are welcome. At 9 p.m. will be the lighting of a beacon in Wrixon Fields.

On Sunday 16th August Dawn is organising a "bring your own family picnic" at 1 p.m. for which she is asking a £3 donation to Poppy Appeal with a rounders match. Full details can be obtained from the Town Hall.

#### Next branch meeting is 21st September

As so many people have said they are on holiday in August there will be no August meeting, the next branch meeting will be on Monday 21st September at the Millers Inn. This will be followed by a social evening, details of which will be in August Sandbag which will be published as usual.

## What a great day ! Armed Forces Day 2015



Our third Armed Forces Day Family event on 27th June was, in the opinion of those who attended, the best yet. The public came by in big numbers all day long and lots of people stayed - what was very encouraging was that they were not only members but included local families and our military friends too. Both the Army and Marines brought equipment along to see and the Army Air Corps heavy crane with a lifting arm capable of popping balloons was a big hit with the children. The all terrain "BV" tracked vehicle of the Royal Marines caught the eye of many youngsters too and sitting inside it gave them a big thrill. There was also Army radio equipment and a Land Rover and kit available to see. We were also fortunate to have one of the Navy pilots displaying flying kit which the children were allowed to try on.



We are most grateful to the many members who turned up as "helpers" running the book stall, tea bar, erecting gazebos and laying out chairs and tables etc. It was splendid team effort and nice to see so many of our members not only helping but enjoying themselves too.

John Sansom and his son arranged to erect the gazebos and Dave Winscombe did a splendid job keeping the barbecue and bar going all day.



We had some good support from outside the branch too from Kate Hurley (and her mum !) our County secretary and Adam Brown Poppy Appeal County fundraising representative. Kate manned the Legion information stall and was successful in recruiting several new branch members for us and Adam operated our Poppy Appeal stall where he raised £113.36 for Wincanton Poppy Appeal selling the children's goodies. Proceeds from the raffle, selling books and refreshments raised £460.80 after taking out costs of raffle prizes and refreshments supplies. So in all the event also had the effect of increasing our Poppy Appeal total this year by another £574. Both Sandra as Poppy Appeal Organiser and myself wish to thank everyone who helped make this event the success it was. *Tony*



### VJ Day 70 years ago

With the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War next month and the final surrender of Japan on 14th August 1945 it is not hard for one of our members to remember where she was on VJ Day 1945.

Pat (Maddie) Bowler was born in Shanghai, China whilst her father was serving as an officer in the British Merchant Navy, mainly sailing from Shanghai and serving in the Far East. British involvement in China was long and complicated, historically many western countries had established “treaty ports” in China, one of which was Shanghai. Pat’s father and mother set up home in nearby Tientsin where Pat’s early life was idyllic but Japan had been waging an undeclared war against China from July 1937. Her mother died in 1939 and then her father’s ship was torpedoed with all hands were feared lost, being totally alone she was taken in by a kind friend who had a son and for a while normal family life returned. But everything changed when the Japanese attacked the Americans at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and total war broke out in the Far East. Shanghai was bombed by the Japanese and confusion reigned. For a while Pat, who was six years old at the time, still continued to go to school but one day Japanese soldiers appeared and all “enemy citizens ” were being rounded up for internment and then what followed was described by Pat as “a long march”. With very few possessions they eventually arrived at a former American Presbyterian mission at Weihsien in northern China which was being used as an internment camp. Conditions were very poor but during the three years they were to be there inmates did manage to acquire and steal comfort items and piping that would enable a stove to be used. Although the Japanese treated the Chinese and Allied military prisoners appallingly, committing many atrocities against them, Pat does not remember them behaving in such a manner at Weihsien but then she was very young. Food was always a problem and they existed on very spartan supplies for the whole three years she was there, often crushing up egg shells into powder and making it into a thick paste substance to get calcium. Then at last came liberation on 17th August 1945 after Japan had surrendered 3 days earlier, a low flying aircraft appeared. It was American dropping leaflets in Japanese at first followed by seven armed American soldiers on parachutes (see picture left). To the utter joy of the prisoners the Japanese laid down their arms and quickly surrendered obeying the orders of the Emperor. For many of us seeing the scenes of London and other world capitals then, it could be forgiven not to have realised what was happening far off in Asia ! Pat’s father did survive the torpedoing of his ship and was reunited with her after the war.

Pat aged 5



### Coffee Morning 15th August

We have booked the Memorial Hall on 15th August for our quarterly Coffee Morning but the date now conflicts with the VJ Day commemoration, consequently we have decided to cancel the Coffee Morning. Please make every effort to be at the War Memorial at 10.45 a.m. where we will assemble for the VJ Day commemoration. We will not be having another meeting before VJ Day so I suggest that you closely watch announcements at the Town Hall. We will be having our trip to Sandhurst on 5th August so I will be able to alert those attending that event of any updates for VJ Day.

### Old Faithful Day 2015



We observe the crash of the American Flying Fortress "Old Faithful" every year on the anniversary - 25th June, and this year was no exception. Michael Watts (2nd from left) placed a wreath from the branch as he has done for several years now. Michael's father owned Snag farm where the aircraft crashed on that day in 1944. Again this year Zac Smith played Last Post and our chaplain the Rev Nigel Feaver led us in prayers at the memorial.

### Poppy Appeal 2015-2016

As part of Poppy Appeal launch 2015/16 Richard Cummins of the Unicorn Inn Bayford will be hosting a social evening event on Wednesday 28th October. Full details will be in August Sandbag.

### THE trip of the year !

This year we have not made losses on our trips, in fact the trip to Sandhurst because it is fuller than expected probably will show a modest profit. This enables us to go for one expensive destination but keep the cost of the trip still at £12.

On 22nd August we will go to Oxford.

We will leave Wincanton at 8.30 a.m. to enable a full day. In the meantime I will get tourist information about Oxford to maximize use of the day. Although I did cancel our day at Lynmouth & Lynton in June because it was too expensive we did go to Lyme Regis on the same day instead which was most enjoyable and affordable. In doing this we have kept our separate trips fund in good shape. Just to remind members, rightly, I am not allowed to use RBL charity money on social events and all social events including the monthly coach trips must be self funding. I run an external account for this purpose and submit accounts for this to the committee.

### July trip to Sidmouth & Ottery Garden Centre 25th July

We still have seats available for our trip to Sidmouth on 25th July. We will make a stop at the large Ottery Garden Centre on the way with time for coffee and a look round.

We will depart from the Memorial Hall at 9 a.m. and the cost is £12 as usual.

### Annual Dinner 9th October

As I mentioned earlier in the year we have booked the Annual Dinner this year for 9th October at the Memorial Hall. There has been a reorganisation at the Olive Bowl in Gillingham and our original caterers there have formed an outside catering company with lots of experience with events at the Memorial Hall, so we will be using them for the catering. I will be putting booking forms and menus in the August Sandbag together with full details of the event. Please make a note in your diary. The price will be £20 each and the dinner will start at 7.30 p.m. There will be a licensed bar.