



# "SANDBAG"

## WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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### NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

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### Poppy Appeal edition

#### Why do we wear a poppy

During the First World War a Canadian doctor named, John McCrae, wrote a poem entitled "In Flanders Fields" after he witnessed the death of his close friend in 1915. The opening lines refer to the many poppies which were the first flowers to grow in the churned up mud of the Flanders area of France & Belgium. The poem which seemed to capture the futility of war, was published and it immediately caught the imagination of the public. The poem inspired an American woman, Moina Michael and she campaigned to have the red poppy adopted to symbolize "Remembrance" of those who died in wars. The American Legion was first to adopt the symbol and it was followed by veterans groups in Britain, Canada, Australia & New Zealand. In 1921 the British Legion was formed by veterans who had served in the war and Lady Haig wife of the British Commander in Chief, Earl Haig, lobbied for the poppy to be adopted as its remembrance symbol. Earl Haig was one of the founders of the British Legion. The artificial poppy similar to those we have today was sold to raise money for veterans who needed help.



The First World War ended with an Armistice on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and following the founding of the British Legion every 11<sup>th</sup> November would then be Remembrance Day and the nearest Sunday to it would be "Remembrance Sunday" when church services would be held. As the Armistice was signed at 11 a.m. it was also decided that the Nation would observe a Two Minutes Silence on this date and time. After the First World War many veterans came home to find they had no jobs to go to and found themselves destitute. Many had recovered from wounds which had scarred them and others had lost limbs. There was no unemployment payments or social care then and many veterans faced very hard times. Money raised from selling the poppies helped them get through life and the practice has continued today. Now called the Royal British Legion, the organization finds it just as hard as ever as many soldiers, sailors and airmen still have a need for help, especially since the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Legion supports them and provides for rehabilitation centres, help with artificial limbs and readjustment after being wounded and falling on hard times.

Last year Wincanton RBL raised a record £17,500 from poppy selling and we do hope to achieve something like this amount this year. As you know Sam Atherton took over as Poppy Appeal Organiser and we are assisting in her transition into the role. I am attempting to cover at Morrison's Supermarket for the period 4th, 5th & 6th November, and I am sorting out a roster. **If you are able to assist please give me a call on 01963-824193.** Just under half of all moneys raised from our appeal were collected at Morrison's and it is an important part of our effort. We have the support of our cadet units again this year with a collection at Wincanton Racecourse where around £1600 was raised in one day. We are also hoping for the Scouts, Cubs, Brownies and Guides to help—they did an excellent job for us last year.

On Remembrance Sunday **13th November** the Wincanton Cub group have invited **veterans and serving military personnel** to the Masonic Hall (at the parade dismissal point) to take afternoon tea and light refreshments after the parade.

## Busy October is here

As seems to be usual that each year October is always busy but I think this year has been busier than ever. It seems a long time ago ( back in February) that we first were invited to visit the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth but the wait was definitely worth it. On 7th October a full coach load of members visited Dartmouth and as well as the group who visited the college a dozen or so members just visited Dartmouth town for the day. Although it rained in Dartmouth most of the day it did not dampen our spirits and everyone had an excellent time. The tour of the college was fantastic with an



informative and enthusiastic guide we were able to have a very comprehensive tour. One striking sight was the chapel window which is positioned so that the sun shines through an adjacent onto St. George on Trafalgar Day, 23rd October - we just missed it by a few weeks (and the sun !!). Steve was also able to enhance his Victoria Cross website by viewing and photographing the two original Victoria Crosses won by Lt. Cdr. Arthur Harrison VC and Lt. Richard Sandford VC both graduates of the college. I was also able to kindle boyhood memories of my hero Captain Fogarty Fegan VC mentioned on the Roll of Honour. Captain Fegan commanded the armed merchant cruiser HMS Jervis Bay which was attacked by the German battleship Admiral Scheer whilst protecting 38 shups in convoy in 1940. Thirty one of the ships escaped but Jervis Bay was sunk



**Medals of Lt. Richard Sandford VC**

and Captain Fegen killed in that uneven battle.

The spectacular tour covered all aspects of the college, which is run on the lines of a ship complete with the "quarterdeck". During the Second World War, after six Focke-Wulf aircraft bombed the College in September 1942, students and staff moved activities to Eaton Hall in Cheshire until the autumn of 1946. Two bombs had penetrated the College's main block, causing damage to the quarterdeck and surrounding rooms. The picture (right) shows one of the bombs which did not explode

Included in our group were three members Ann and Mike Rowlands and Dee Chilton who graduated from the college prior gaining their commissions into the Royal Navy.



## Branch also visited the Royal Navy Historic Flight and Commando Helicopter Force



Over 30 members had a wonderful day on 19th October visiting the Royal Navy Historic Flight and Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) at RNAS Yeovilton.. It was combination of two invitations, the first coordinated by Katrina Campbell at the Historic Flight and the other by Major (Rtd) Lee Bower, the public relations officer at the CHF. Our day started at the Historic Flight with a fascinating tour of the hangar housing the Royal Navy's vintage airplanes being maintained in flying condition. We were all aware there was one flagship Swordfish aircraft but were very pleased to see a second being worked on which will be flying soon. There is also a third too but this is not in such an advance state. Swordfish aircraft of the Royal Navy decimated the Italian battle fleet moored in Taranto, Italy in November 1940 and also attacked the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau in the Straits of Dover in February 1942. The Swordfish are rightly held with great reverence in the Royal Navy. Katrina gave us an excellent tour showing us also the Sea Fury and other aircraft of the Flight. Lunch was had in the "Galley" restaurant - the Navy do live well !! Then off we went to the Commando Helicopter Force in the afternoon. Everyone was aware of the very special relationship we have with the CHF which goes back 8 years when we formally adopted the unit. We were given an overview of their role and briefed of their current duties followed by a visit to 846 Naval Air Squadron to see their new Merlin helicopters. We were able to view inside the aircraft, which was good because we often see CHF Merlins flying over Wincanton and it was nice to see them up real close. The exceptional visit - which everyone greatly enjoyed, was important to us to show our support for the Commando Helicopter Force and the Military in general to demonstrate our support for the excellent work they do on behalf of the Country.

**Coffee Morning 22nd October  
Launches Poppy Appeal**

**A provisional date for Annual Dinner is**  
Continuing “busy October” we held a Coffee Morning on 22nd October to launch Poppy Appeal. Thanks to everyone for making it such a successful morning, which launched Wincanton Poppy Appeal.  
A total of £125.50 was raised from the raffle and sale of poppy items to start off Poppy Appeal and a further £88.75 raised for branch funds from the sale of books and the tea and coffee bar.  
The poppy year boxes are also being collected from local businesses and the first to be counted from Papertrees stationers (their 2nd this year) yielded over £37. We also expect similar amounts

**Poppy Appeal 2016**

Poppy Appeal 2016 started on 27th October and as it is Sam’s first year at doing Poppy Appeal Organiser everyone is helping to get her going this year. Although we do have a roster going for collecting at Morrison’s supermarket she could need help in not only this but other things so if you feel you wanted to help Poppy Appeal give Sam a call at the Town Hall during business hours on 01963-31693

**48th Highlanders of Canada**

Some of you are aware of my close association with the 48th Highlanders of Canada. They support our Poppy Appeal by buying through us their special wreaths for placing at regimental memorials in France and Belgium. In fact I have just returned from Europe delivering their wreaths which benefit our Poppy Appeal by over £250 this year . The Regiment fought alongside Britain in both the First and Second World Wars. I have been offered a significant role with the Regimental Association and I will use this to promote closer contact with the branch and them and keep you advised. Some of their soldiers died of wounds graves and are buried at Netheravon, Wiltshire and I placed a wreath and crosses at their graves recently..

**Christmas Carols Singalong 3rd December**

We are holding a joint event with Wincanton Live at Home Scheme on **3rd December at the Memorial Hall**. The evening starts at 7 p.m. and costs £6 each. Tickets will be available at the Town Hall and by phone from Live at Home on 01963-33588.or on the door.  
Proceeds will be split between Wincanton RBL and the Live at Home Scheme.  
It sounds like a fantastic evening because we have the support of members of the Wincanton Silver Band and to help with us all singing our favourite carols our friends at Wincanton Amateur Dramatics Society will be there too. Andy Chilton is coordinating our side of this event.  
The Wincanton Live At Home Scheme is a local charity set up 11 years ago to provide safe social contact for the elderly living in Wincanton and the surrounding 5 mile area, who otherwise were lonely and isolated from the community. They run day centres (on behalf of Social Services), various lunch clubs, outings, theatre trips, concerts and our annual holiday. All of their activities include transport door to door if needed and they offer a befriending service for those who are housebound and unable to attend the lunches. Other services they can provide members with include a Handyman scheme for any little DIY job around the house.If you feel they could be of help give them a call on 01963-33588.

**Christmas lunch 15th December at Millers Inn**

We have again booked the Millers Inn for our pre Christmas lunch which will be on 15th December. Lunch will be served at 12.30 p.m. - assemble for pre lunch drinks at 12 noon. It is a two course meal again and cost will be £12.50 per person. Menu: Main meal is turkey, beef or vegetarian option. Dessert: profiteroles, Christmas pudding or selection of cheese & biscuits followed by tea or coffee and mints. A meal preference form will be distributed shortly but as the capacity is around 30 people please advise John Pennington on 01963– 32546 if you would like to attend. If numbers exceed 30 it may be possible to also get 14th December as well—please advise John of your date flexibility.  
A provisional date for Annual Dinner is 21st January and this will be confirmed at the Christmas Lunch.

**Remembrance 2016**

11th November assemble at the War Memorial Hall at 10.45 a.m. Remembrance Sunday 13th November assemble at 2.15 p.m. Church Service 3 p.m.