



# "SANDBAG"

## WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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### NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

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Branch secretary Steve Lee 01963-34374

Next social event Saturday 27th January Quiz night at the Millers

January/  
February  
2018

#### Remembrance 2017

I think we will all agree Remembrance Sunday this year was a really memorable event. As well as a large group of our members joining the parade we also had a strong contingent from the Army Air Corps present along with the Fire Service and their cadets we also had support from our adopted cadets from TS Mantle VC. Present too were cubs and brownies along with the mayor and town councillors. As Dave Hill was not able to be parade marshal this due to being unwell the



parade was commanded by the Regimental Sergeant Major of 1 Regt. Army Air Corps WO1 Joseph Billington. As always we were led by Wincanton Silver Band which was as excellent as ever. Fine weather prevailed enabling a very large turnout for the parade and it was good to see so many members take part this year. The cubs, brownies, and Sea and Marine Cadets placed a cross for each of our War Dead around the War Memorial. After our church service veterans and serving military personnel were served tea and cakes by our cub scouts in the Masonic Hall.

On Saturday 11th November we held the National Two Minutes Silence around the War Memorial along with TS Mantle VC Sea & Marine Cadets. The short service was led by our Chaplain Revd. Nigel Feaver and the mayor Cllr. Howard Ellard placed the wreath on behalf of the town along with our official wreaths. It was gratifying to see a very large amount of townspeople joining us. Zac Smith again played Last Post. A small group then laid wreaths at the Old Faithful Flying Fortress Memorial at which Margaret Watts placed a wreath on behalf of the family. Photos courtesy Terry Fisher Photography (copyright)





## The roads named after the war heroes of Wincanton

In the last Sandbag I mentioned that speaking with the young students from King Arthur's School, I asked if they knew how the new roads in Wincanton got their name. As they did not know I feel it important to remind everyone and last month told the story of the Atkins cousins after whom Atkins Hill is named. The other road named so far is Crocker Way named after Victor Crocker (pictured right).

Victor lived at Overton, Wincanton and was born in Shaftesbury on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1920, his mother and father Harold and Ellen Crocker had six children – four girls and two boys. He went to Wincanton Council School and sang in the choir at the Parish Church. Victor joined the peacetime Royal Navy on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1935 at the age of 15 years and was trained at HMS Ganges which was the training establishment in Ipswich for boy entrants into the service. His first ship was the battleship HMS Royal Sovereign and in April 1937 he was posted to HMS Rodney, one of the Navy's front line battleships. Just prior to the outbreak of war he

joined the destroyer HMS Jaguar, by this time with the rank of Able Seaman. During the evacuation of the British Army from Dunkirk when the "Little Ships" were sent to evacuate the Army, Victor Crocker was on board HMS Jaguar sent to assist in the successful operation. The ship was heavily damaged by German aircraft but made it back to England. Whilst the ship was being repaired Victor was allowed home leave and he came back to Wincanton, in his uniform, still dirty and bedraggled having come direct from Dover. He told his family how traumatic it was for him and doubted if he would ever survive the war.

Victor became a Leading Seaman, it would appear, at an early age, which was probably due to his training at HMS Ganges. He returned to HMS Jaguar after repairs and was with the ship when it took part in the naval action off Cape Spartivento near Sardinia on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1940. At this time an inferior British force (which included the battleship HMS Renown and aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal ) were escorting a convoy when they attacked a large Italian formation of warships including two battleships. The bold action caused the Italians to flee saving the convoy.

Victor remained with HMS Jaguar and saw action with that ship in many naval incidents. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1941 HMS Jaguar along with the battleships HMS Warspite and HMS Barham took part in the bombardment of Tripoli and on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1941 was at the Battle of Crete. By 1942 HMS Jaguar, a J Class Destroyer, was with the 7<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla in Alexandria. Later for a time the ship was transferred to the Malta flotilla, at the time Malta was being constantly bombed by both the German Luftwaffe and the Italian Air Force. In spite of the onslaught Malta remained in British hands and one of three major bases for the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean (along with Gibraltar and Alexandria). When Malta became untenable HMS Jaguar went back to Alexandria. Warships from Alexandria operated throughout the Mediterranean and on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1942 HMS Jaguar was escorting the tanker Slavol, bringing supplies to the 5<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla at Tobruk. (Tobruk was under siege by the German Africa Corps commanded by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel). At 0445 hrs HMS Jaguar was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U652 whilst attempting to pick up survivors from the Slavol which had also been previously torpedoed by U652. 193 of the crew of HMS Jaguar were lost. 53 survivors were rescued by the South African anti-submarine whaler Klo. The tanker Slavol also sank soon after. Victor Crocker was amongst the 193 Royal Navy men who lost their lives. Victor's body and many of the crew was never recovered and has no known grave but the sea. His memorial is located on Plymouth Naval Memorial, which was the home base of HMS Jaguar and can be found on Panel 63 Column 3.



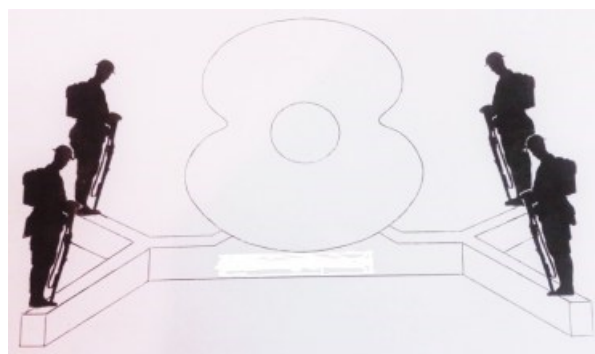


## Remembrance Sunday 1926

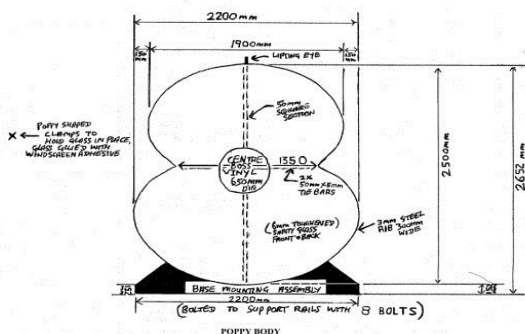
This interesting photo was given to Steve, it shows the Remembrance Sunday parade on 14th November 1926. The parade led by Wincanton Silver Band shows our veterans of the Great War 1914 - 1918 wearing their medals and parading through the town. I am sure everyone recognises where it was taken from - the Town Hall, but sadly I would believe nobody would now know who any of those veterans were (or do they ? ).

## A new permanent memorial in Wincanton.

Although it is not a branch event as such the project has gained official RBL accreditation, so I feel you will be interested to know that a new memorial is intended to be erected in Wincanton. Leading this initiative is Terry Williams our branch Standard Bearer. Terry has been working on this for several years now and he intends to have the memorial unveiled on 6th October 2018. When Terry first mentioned this to me and told me he was struggling for a significant date that will not clash with national events during the 100th anniversary year of the ending of the First World War I suggested to him he should go for a date in October 2018 which would be 100 years after the assault and the breakthrough of the Hindenburg Line and the Battle of Cambrai during the “great push”, which ended with the German Armistice on 11th November 1918. The idea is to have a Remembrance poppy for every one of the 1,115,471 War Dead from Britain and the Commonwealth killed during the First World War sealed inside a memorial. The poppies along with a box containing artefacts and soil from every battlefield of the First World War will then be encased in a sealed glass structure which has been totally weather proofed and treated. The structure in the shape of a poppy will be on a metal base and have silhouettes of four soldiers with rifles in “reverse arms”. At first the memorial will be portable and will go on tour of the British Isles before finally coming back to Wincanton to a permanent site. It has been designed so that it could be displayed indoors or outdoors with minimum effort to assemble and will take only 4 people to assemble or take apart.



The Poppy of Honour is self supporting so does not require any foundations, just a level area to allow assembly. It will be shot blasted to clean the metal, then cold sprayed galvanised, primed and finally it will be sprayed coated with an epoxy resin type paint to seal and protect the metal from corrosion. When the poppies are inside and the glass is sealed, the air inside will be extracted and replaced with a gas to preserve the poppies and minimise discolouring. The Poppy of Honour 2018 will be on display in Wincanton and the unveiling ceremony will be on Saturday 6th October 2018 at 11.00am. As more emerges I will keep everyone updated.





### First coach trip of 2018

Our first trip of the year will be to Winchester on Saturday 24th March. We did intend going to Winchester during 2017 but plans changed so I decided by popular request to make this the first trip of the year.

I do sincerely need your cooperation with early confirmations and payments to enable planning and paying South West Coaches. Cost will be £12 adults and children £6 (under 5 years old free) and departure from the Memorial Hall is 9 a.m. The list is now open and available at Quiz Night.

### Quiz and Fun Evening 27th January

We are now accepting names and teams for the Quiz Night and a "Pie and Mash" Fun Evening at the Millers Inn on Saturday 27th January. Teams can be between four and six people. The cost is £7 per person to include the meal and entrance to the Quiz. Food will be served at 7 p.m. (it will be self service so those who work can still have the meal if a little late) and it will be served in the dining room at the side of the Millers. I will be quizmaster - "having had years of experience" and I promise the questions will be just hard enough ! Please let me have your names and teams by 18th January to enable catering. I am confident it will be a good evening.

### A big year coming up !

As we all know 2018 is the 100th anniversary of the ending of the First World War and many local and national events will be taking place. A significant date for your diary will be 7th July 2018 when there will be a very special whole day event at Dunkirk Memorial House, near Taunton. At this moment I do not have full details but please put the date in your diary. We will be arranging a coach. Many members will remember that several years ago County of Somerset RBL arranged a similar summer event which we all attended as a branch and it was an amazing success. As we not only want to fill the coach but also encourage cooperation with other nearby RBL branches we will be inviting them to join our coach.

### Excellent Poppy Appeal this year !!

Dawn and Teresa have just given me an update of Poppy Appeal 2017 collections as it stands so far. They wish to thank everyone who helped achieve a fantastic £16,005 and money is still coming in and Gift Aid is not yet taken into account. Some of the highlights were the collections at Morrison's and Wincanton Racecourse Collection by our Sea Cadets.

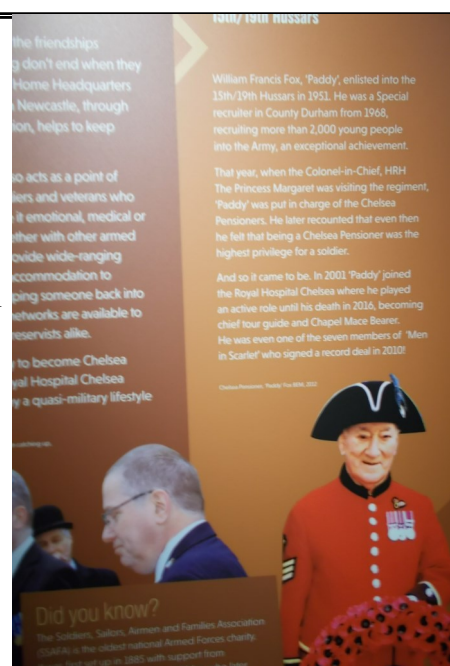
A total of £9406 was raised at Morrison's and at the Racecourse the cadets collected well over £1600 both records for the locations.

On behalf of the branch and the County Poppy Appeal I would like to thank Dawn and Teresa for organising such a successful Poppy Appeal and also thanks to all the volunteers who supported them. It was an excellent effort this year which the massive figure shows. Well done everyone who helped !!

### Paddy still remembered

It does not seem possible but it was two years ago on 9th January that our much loved "adopted Chelsea Pensioner" Paddy Fox passed away. He is still remembered with much affection and we have some wonderful memories of the many times Paddy came to

Wincanton. Paddy became a member of our branch in 2008 after our first visit to the Royal Hospital Chelsea. On a recent visit to Newcastle I visited the Discovery Centre and Museum and to my great delight I noted that included in their military section was a tribute to Paddy. The local Army regiment for Newcastle and the North East is the 15th/19th Hussars (Paddy's old regiment) and the museum acknowledges Paddy's role as special recruiter for County Durham and the remarkable achievement of recruiting 2000 soldiers to the regiment. Paddy was awarded the British Empire Medal for this and outstanding devotion to military service.



**Wishing all our members a very Happy New Year**