



"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

June/July
2018

Next event Coffee Morning & AGM 16th June - Memorial Hall 10 a.m. until noon

**Coffee Morning & AGM
16th June**

This year we are combining our AGM with a Coffee Morning on 16th June. The Coffee Morning as such will run from 10 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. and then we will continue with the AGM which will give an overview of the last year and our plans for the future. It is important we have members attending as there could be changes in our committee. We also need to discuss how members see the way forward.

Committee members need to confirm to Steve if they wish to continue their roles this year. Roles in question are Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-Chairman, President, Vice-President, Standard Bearer and Deputy Standard Bearer.

Branch committee are also considering making a donation to The Royal British Legion Dunkirk Memorial House at Bishop's Lydeard, this will require a vote be taken at the AGM.

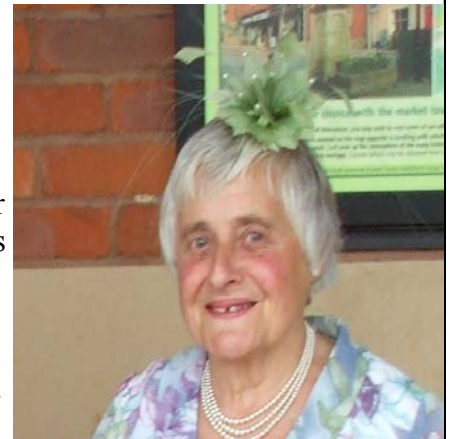
**Festival of Remembrance 2018
Royal Albert Hall Saturday 10th November**

It is that time again when we have been advised by RBL County that we can apply for the branch allocation of four places to attend the Festival of Remembrance, this year being 10th November. If you wish to go please let me know as it is "first come / first served".

Tickets cost £10 each and are for the evening performance - due to the lateness of the finish of the event it is wise to consider staying in London overnight. Please realise we only have four tickets on our allocation and there is usually considerable interest. Please contact me as soon as possible if you are interested. *Tony*

Dora Hibberd

I am very sad to say Dora Hibberd passed away on 11th May after a long illness. Dora was involved with so many charities and much voluntary work in Wincanton that it could fill a book. We shall remember her for her



tireless efforts supporting Poppy Appeal each year and for her actively taking part in meetings and our social

Old Faithful 2018

I do realise that those in Wincanton who actually remember the crash of the Flying Fortress "Old Faithful" are becoming a dwindling band of people, but we all feel it is most important to continue to observe the sacrifice made by the American crew. It was on 25th June 1944 that a lone Flying Fortress returning badly damaged from a bombing raid on enemy occupied Toulouse, France, crashed near Snag Farm Wincanton at around 3 p.m. Personal accounts from witnesses stated that it was obvious the crew were desperately trying to avoid crashing on populated areas of Wincanton, but in doing so with the weakened structure of the plane and the fire in the engines tragedy was inevitable. The pilot 2nd Lt. Peter Mikonis was desperately trying to fly to RAF Zeals, which was shown as an emergency diversion airfield but unfortunately it lay on high ground and the aircraft was losing height heading straight for town when it crashed. The memorial to "Old Faithful" on Bayford Hill was erected by a grateful town in the 1950s. This year we will lay wreaths and have a simple ceremony at the memorial at 3 p.m. on Sunday 24th June, with Last Post, please come if you can. We have a debt of honour to these brave men to remember them!

Our local military connections

With Armed Forces Day rapidly approaching it seems timely to remind our readers of the close connections we enjoy at Wincanton RBL with our local military units. We are very proud of our military and always like to acknowledge our appreciation to them. Amazingly it was as long ago as March 2007 that we formally adopted The Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) based at RNAS Yeovilton. Their then OC Commander Rick Fox RN accepted our formal affiliation and we then went on to enjoy a very close relationship particularly when they were on active service in Afghanistan. As Royal British Legion charity rules prohibited us directly paying for anything from our branch funds we decided to form an account run separately as “Wincanton Supports Our Troops” and sent comfort items out to Afghanistan to them. A particular favourite was boiled sweets as they did not need toiletries etc., which they could get easily over there. In all we raise around £2000 and kept a continual flow of goodies going there all the time they were there.

Some of our sweets arriving in Afghanistan 2008



Branch visit, handing over sweets at Yeovilton in 2008



Feedback from them was astounding with several contacts from personnel thanking us and saying it was a morale booster for them when they were in a difficult situation. Over the years we have visited CHF at Yeovilton and representatives have attended our branch Annual Dinners. Certainly one of the highlights of our relationship was when the Naval Air Squadrons returned home from Afghanistan in 2009 and Wincanton was honoured in celebrating their homecoming with a parade through the town and the mayor Cllr. David Marsh presented them with a certificate of thanks for a job well done. A service of thanksgiving took place in the parish church and a civic reception was held in the Memorial Hall. We are fortunate in having many serving Royal Navy members and retirees living in the town and indeed our branch are heavily represented by former naval veterans.



Homecoming of the Naval Air Squadrons



The Army arrives

I think I am still right in saying that there is only one *army* garrison in Somerset and before 2014 there was not a garrison actually stationed in Somerset. Well that all changed in a big way in late 2014 when 1 Regiment Army Air Corps relocated from Gutersloh, Germany. Government military housing policy changed and the Ministry of Defence started buying married quarters in towns near bases and we were very fortunate in being one town selected to have this new concept. Since then a very strong relationship has grown between the town and our new arrivals. This culminated with the Town Council granting the Freedom of Wincanton to the Regiment on 26th April 2016.



On Remembrance Sunday 2016 the Regiment held their Regimental Remembrance Service in the parish church and a detachment of soldiers took part in our Royal British Legion Parade in the afternoon. Last year was the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele and when our Rector was unavailable for the commemorations on 30th July 1 Regiment's Chaplain Revd. Peter Dixon agreed to lead our service, remembering the soldiers from Wincanton killed at Passchendaele.



By Remembrance Sunday 2017 we had established a firm connection with 1 Regiment and again the Regimental Remembrance Service was held in the parish church in the morning. Again in the afternoon soldiers of the Regiment joined us for our parade this time providing a very large contingent who stayed and joined our church service. Since then we have enjoyed meeting soldiers socially and a new strong relationship is developing.

We sincerely hope this continues and we look forward to expanding on this.

You will see that on Armed Forces Day this year (30th June) at the Bear Inn we hope to show our continued support and appreciation for the fine work they are doing.

Trips to the seaside

The next two members days out are both to the seaside and are as follows :-

June 23rd Exmouth. Departing from the Memorial Hall at 9 a.m. with a full day at Exmouth and getting home around 6 p.m.

July 28th Weston Super Mare also departing at 9 a.m. and returning at 6 p.m.

Both trips tickets are £15 adults, £7.50 children (under 5 free).

The lists are open so please contact me as soon as possible. *Tony*

Sandhurst trip

I now need to firm up numbers for the proposed visit to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on 8th August. I have a tentative list of around 20 people wishing to go but I now need this to become a firm commitment by mid June. As we know Lucy has now moved on but she introduced me to a contact at Sandhurst who has agreed to give us a tour of the academy and arrange for tickets to the Passing Out Parade . The cost for this would be £12 per person, he suggests that we bring a packed lunch with us as it is not possible to have food provided this time. Our AGM and Coffee Morning is on 16th June when we will finalize this that morning so I would appreciate it if you could attend to express your views and make a commitment. I am actively pursuing transport to Sandhurst with the CAT Bus which could cost a further £15 each for a maximum of 16 people. It is possible for more places but these are dependant on transport. We could also discuss how many members would be able to take their cars and offer lifts to others which could alleviate the need to hire transport. Those who came last time can confirm that it was an amazing spectacle.



Armed Forces Day 2018 - 30th June

Over the last few years we have had Armed Forces Day celebrations at the Memorial Hall. We have found that for many reasons the venue has not proved successful so this year we have decided to take up an offer from Matt and Zoe at the Bear Inn for them to host the event. As they both have many contacts with military families in town this may too be a chance to meet many of them socially, which is what we have hoped for in the past. Another big plus is that it will not cost us anything to hire the premises.

The location is very central in town and there will be lots of people passing by who may be tempted to come in. We will be having stands including a Poppy Appeal stand with all of this years merchandise, our popular book stand and of course the raffle. In attendance will be our friends at Wincanton Silver Band and the young people from Wincanton Youth Theatre who will be entertaining us with songs and dancing from their current summer review. Also there will be live music featuring popular songs. There will be a bouncy castle and face painting for the youngsters. The free event starts at 12 noon and there is a licensed bar all day with a barbecue selling burgers and bangers etc.

There will be military demonstrations as other years. All of our proceeds will as usual go to Poppy Appeal (2017/18) which the current year runs until October.

Western Super Mare Armed Forces event 23rd & 24th June

Western Super Mare branch are holding an Armed Forces event on 23rd/24th June. Featuring the Band of HM Royal Marines and lots of things happening including military involvement.

World War 1 “Thank You event 7th July

As mentioned in the last Sandbag the branch will be attending the largest event in Somerset to commemorate the end of the First World War on 7th July at Dunkirk Memorial House and grounds near Taunton. This excellent day out will include Marching Bands, Military Wives Choir, Shire Horses, WW1 Field Hospital, Vintage Vehicles, Sideshows, children’s activities and a licenced bar. We would like to get a coach arranged and possibly share it with other local RBL branches. The event is free of charge to get in and a coach would cost £15 each. Firm names will also be taken at the AGM.