



# THE NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2019



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**Monday 17 June 2019**

**Henley-on-Thames Branch  
of the Royal British Legion  
celebrated its 90th anniversary**



## Meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month unless otherwise advised.

Venue – The Christ Church Centre, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1AG

Talk 11.30 (please be seated by 11.20) Lunch 12 for 12.30

Please book for lunch by the Thursday before by phone  
to Branch Secretary, on 01491 638885 or helentwalsh2014@gmail.com

### Autumn Dates for your Diary

#### 19 August - Brig Malcolm Page

Captain A. Gibb, DSO DSM, circa 1906-1922 in Somaliland, in the campaign against Sayid Mohamed Abdillahi Hassan (the Mad Mullah in British press parlance)

#### 16 September - Malcolm Lewis

'The Fighting Temeraire' Turner's 'My Darling' the name the illustrious painter gave to his most famous painting which he refused ever to sell. Malcolm Lewis, who is a member of the Society for Nautical Research, will talk about the ship which fought at Trafalgar and Turner's favourite painting."

#### 21 October - Lt Col (Retd) John Balding GM OBE

'Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal Operator' John joined the Army as a Junior soldier in the Ammunition Technician' trade. He held various appointments over his 40+ years distinguished career rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, mainly in the world of Explosive Ordnance Disposal and was awarded the George Medal and OBE in recognition for his service.

#### 10 November

Remembrance Sunday Lunch (after Parade and Service) 1pm The Christ Church Centre

#### 16 December

Christmas Lunch - The Christ Church Centre





## Branch's 90th Anniversary

On Monday 17 June 2019 fifty-five members and friends of the branch took to the water for a 4 hour trip on the Thames in Hobbs of Henley's private passenger vessel The Waterman.



This special event to mark the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Henley-on-Thames Branch of the Royal British Legion, was a huge success.

The distinguished guest speaker, Lieutenant General Sir Michael Willcocks KCB, CVO set the tone for the trip by his witty account of his military career and service as Black Rod to the House of Lords, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



The crew of The Waterman were most friendly and hospitable. The attention shown to the less agile members whilst boarding the boat, was especially appreciated.

All partook of a splendid buffet and following the desert and coffee, John Green, Branch Chairman, ceremoniously cut the special anniversary cake provided by the bakers, Lawlor's of Henley

He reminded everyone that there were many photographs and other memorabilia from the Branch's 90 years on board for members to reminisce over and enjoy.



Many took advantage of the lovely weather to sit on the top deck to have their coffee and cake, and enjoy the scenery.

There will a commemorative book with signatures and pictures to record the occasion.

*The Royal British Legion is UK's largest Armed Forces charity with 235,000 members providing financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants.*



# Nijmegen Marches

Being gluttons for punishment, branch members Stan Ainsley, John Green, Judith Phelan and Ania Kozniewska, yet again tackled the internationally famous Nijmegen Marches. This involves 4 successive days of walking on a circular route, starting in Nijmegen and taking them through different villages each day.

"Every village we passed through was in party mood, decorated with flags and bunting, bands playing and the locals cheering us on and handing out fruit and snacks and helping us replenish much needed water supplies."



John and Stan's route involved 30k (20 miles a day) whereas brave Judith and Ania completed 40k (25 miles) each day. Mollie Jeffrey who had not registered for the walk gamely completed three of the four days. Luckily the really hot weather had not kicked-in.



"The many war memorials we passed reminded us of the sacrifice so many paid during the Second World War." John placed RBL memorial crosses at some of these.

Beuningen where a Lancaster crashed on 23rd June 1943 killing 6 crew.

Mook Middelaar where a Canadian soldier, Tony Barbara gave-up his lifejacket to another soldier working on a Bailey bridge and was swept to his death by the current. He literally gave his life to save another.

And finally at the impressive CWGC Canadian Cemetery at Mook where again they paid a brief silent tribute to the fallen.



As the fourth day coincided with John's birthday the après-walk celebrations took on a specially enthusiastic flavour!

Job done!

*John Green*





Branch Chairman John Green attended the annual commemoration marking the anniversary of the Somme battle 1st July 1916 in which the 46th North Midland Division (TA) took a gallant but disastrous part.

John laid a wreath on behalf of the branch in memory of the fallen of his father's regiment The Sherwood Foresters.



*Foncquevillers was just behind the British front lines in the 1916 battles. The Cemetery was originally begun by the French (when they held this part of the line). When the British took over this sector, they continued to use it, with many burials dating from July 1916, the early Somme offensives. It remained in use by units and field ambulances until March 1917. The cemetery was used again from March to August 1918, when the German offensive brought the front line back to nearly the old position. Seventy-four graves were brought in after the Armistice from the battlefields of 1916 and 1918 to the east of the village and the 325 French military graves were removed to La Targette French National Cemetery, near Arras.*

*The cemetery contains 648 burials of the Great War. 53 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to two casualties known to be buried among them. There are five airmen of the Second World War buried in the cemetery, and four Germans. There is also 1 French Non World War burial. Many Chinese provided labour during the First World War, and there are two Chinese Labour Corps men buried here.*

John Green carried the branch Standard at the annual **'raising the flag'** ceremony in the forecourt of Oxford Castle on Monday 24 June to mark the start of Armed Forces Week.



The Lord Lieutenant gave a brief address playing tribute to all three services and made special mention of the role of the Oxfordshire and Bucks Light infantry in securing Pegasus Bridge on D Day.

*"My thoughts were about our own true hero the late Harry Wheeler who landed in the first glider and cut the demolition cables under the bridge" John Green*



A contingent of The Rifles regiment were on parade together with two buglers. So too were the RAF cadets as well as a large group of senior well-bemedalled officers and many members of the Oxford City Council led by the Lord Mayor.



## Armed Forces Day in Henley Sat 29 June.

Army Cadets commanded by Lieut Tom Fearn collected for the Poppy Appeal.

These young people raised £800 pounds on one of the hottest days of the year!



## Army Cadets Parade - Wednesday 10 July.

John Green paraded with the Army Cadets at the Drill Hall Friday street on 10th to receive a donation of the amazing sum of £1518 for the Poppy Appeal .

The sum was made-up of **£718** from a sponsored march and **£800** on Armed Forces Day.

*"I was given the opportunity to address the parade to praise and thank them for their efforts" John Green*



## Obituary - Jean Rooke (nee Valentine)

Jean was born in Perth, Scotland in 1924. She attempted to join the WAAF as a driver, but was rejected, presumably because of her tiny stature (she was 4ft 10 ins tall), so joined the WRNS. She was posted to Bletchley Park, to work on the Bombe, the famous Enigma decoding machine. Being tiny, it was necessary to have a platform to enable her to reach the top row of rotors.

Following training in Japanese codes and cyphers, she was posted to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) and employed on deciphering Japanese metrological reports and distributing the results to fleet reconnaissance units in the Pacific.

It was at this time that she met and subsequently married Clive, a RN Seafire pilot.

After the war had ended, Bletchley's work became better known. In Churchill's well-known phrase, 'They were the geese that laid the golden eggs, yet did not cackle'.

Jeanne eventually became a guide at Bletchley Park and continued in that capacity until her late eighties. She was proud of having demonstrated the Bombe to HM the Queen and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. She was a recipient of the Bletchley Park Badge, as was Pat Rutherford, who had been stationed in Ceylon at the same time as Jean, and engaged on similar work.

Other activities included taking part in 'The Antiques Road Show' and was in the programme Master Chef from Bletchley Park when the three finalists prepared a dinner to honour the code breakers. She appeared in other TV and radio shows and gave talks on her wartime experiences to many groups, including us. She also featured at Bletchley Park when many of our members visited there; an event organised by Shirley Lees.

An unusual honour was when, in 2004, she was featured on a Caribbean postage stamp, wearing her WREN uniform. In retirement, she lived in Marlow for many years, then moved to Henley, where she was active with the Phyllis Court Scrabble group and a regular attendee at our Branch meetings.

She died in Acacia Lodge on 17 May, aged 94. She was cremated on Friday 14 June and a reception followed at Phyllis Court; both were well attended and Nick Launders carried the Peppard Branch Standard at the Crematorium, as John Green was overseas.

*Malcolm Page  
(with acknowledgements to the Henley Standard)*

Please watch this fascinating video "Operating the Bombe" recorded by Jean Rooke - her experiences at Bletchley. Copy and paste the address below into your internet provider (Google) *Anne Evans*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYNen5muQSE#action=share>



## Obituary - Bernard Brook-Partridge - 04.11.1927 - 28.07.2018



**Bernard** was a member of the Henley Branch of the Royal British Legion and served in the Guards at the very end of the Second World War. He lived in Elizabeth Road, Henley and sadly passed away on July 28 at the age of 90, his wife, Carole and his two sons survive him.

His funeral took place at St Mary's Church in Hart Street, Henley. Donations were sent to the Shannon Courtcare home in Hindhead care of funeral directors

Tomalin & Son, of Reading Road, Henley.

**Bernard** was born in Croydon on November 4, 1927. He first married Enid Hatfield in 1951 and the couple had two daughters, before divorcing in 1965. He married Carol Lewis in 1967

He attended Selsdon County Grammar School and before enrolling at Cambridgeshire Technical College, Cambridge University and London University.

He was called to the bar at Grays Inn and thereafter enjoyed a long and varied career in business and politics.

Bernard was also a member of the Poetry Society and was elected to its council in 1977.

In 1983 he became Conservative spokesman on policing and a few years later he criticised Ken Livingstone's campaign to save the GLC, saying it would strengthen Mrs Thatcher's determination, but himself lobbied 300 peers against the abolition, which marked the end of his political career.

In his entry in Who's Who, he named one of his pastimes as "being difficult".

He continued to chair the Young Vic Theatre, the London Music Hall Trust, the London Symphony Chorus Development Committee and the Royal Philharmonic Society.

In later decades he was variously president of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries, vice-president of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and deputy chairman of the Central London Masonic Centre.

## Obituary - Andrew John Hamilton Finlay -11.03.1944 - 21.09.2018



A very well attended thanksgiving service for Andrew was held in the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin on Tuesday 30 October 2018 at 2pm.

Andrew was a member of the Royal British Legion and at one time Chairman of our local Henley & Peppard Branch. A source of great pride and achievement for him and his family were the multiple bike rides from London to Paris, Brussels and Lausanne that he undertook in aid of the RBL Poppy Appeal. These raised about £15,000 over several years.

Andrew was born in Zimbabwe. In his early teens, Andrew exhibited his technical nature by frequently dismantling and successfully rebuilding his mother's car.

After leaving Africa for Britain in 1962, he trained at Loughborough College and in 1964 joined the RAF as an engineering officer, serving in Germany for a time. He later had a long career at IBM.

In 1974 he married Kate and the family moved to Waltham St Lawrence in 1984 where the children grew up and Andrew was an active member of the church and parochial church council.

He was a keen sailor and joined the Henley Sailing Club with his children when the family moved to Henley in 2001. Andrew became involved in numerous volunteer and community groups. Organisation he supported included the Henley Volunteer Bureau, Royal British Legion, St Mary's Church and choir, HAODS, the Kenton Theatre, Henley Choral Society, the City Barge Boat Club and more.

Andrew died from acute leukaemia and passed away in the company of John, Sara and Emma.