



THE NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018

BR0753



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Rev Canon Martyn Griffiths, the RBL Branch Chaplain receiving a certificate of appreciation from John Green, Chairman of the Henley & Peppard branch of the Royal British Legion & conducting his last Memorial Service for Henley-on-Thames.

You will be missed Fr Martyn!



© Dave Murray 2017

Dates for Your Diary

Meetings are held on 3rd Monday of the month unless otherwise advised.

Venue – The Christ Church Centre

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

Please book for lunch by the Thursday before by email or phone to our

Branch Secretary **Email** c.w.davies70@btinternet.com - **phone** 01189 722527

Spring Events - 2018

15 January - Peter Blaker 'The role of 1st Green Jackets (our county regiment) in suppressing the Brunei Rebellion December 1962'

19 February - John Green - Report from the County Conference

19 March - Dr Noel Snell - 'A Brief History of Biowarfare & Bioterrorism'

16 April - David Lees - 'Resistance in the French Alps'

21 May - Margaret Thomas, Community fundraiser for Sue Ryder in Nettlebed

18 June - Michaela Clarke - Editor of The Henley Herald

Outside Events

14 April - Major General Peter Williams CMG, OBE
"My Life as a Cold War Spy " At SOFO Museum, Woodstock, Oxfordshire
Reception in the Museum 6.30 - Presentation 7.15pm – 8.15pm
Departure 8.30 - Tickets: £20 - Phone: 01993 810210

7 June - 'Shell Shock' at the Kenton Theatre. A darkly comic and personal realisation of one old soldier's battle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Shell Shock was created with the support of military and mental health charities and presents the biographical tale of 'Tommy', a former soldier attempting to fit back into civilian life after a long career in the military. Tommy's observations on everyday absurdities are frequently humorous, sometimes violent but always poignant. Nothing is safe...post office queues, shopping at Ikea and a Nintendo Wii all feel the full force of Tommy's outraged frustration.

Membership Lapel Badges



Henley Branch has in stock several membership lapel badges at £5 each to offer to existing members. The badges are made of high quality enamel and feature The Royal British Legion lion design, measuring 19mm x 12 mm.

Please place your order with Henley Branch Membership Secretary Mollie Jeffrey (Mollie@billjeffrey.com), making sure to include your contact details, and she will confirm payment and collection arrangements with you.

93rd RBL County Conference 4th Feb 2018

John Green represented the Branch at this year's conference as delegate and Standard Bearer having inherited the role from Brian Hughes.

Melanie Watkins has been appointed new County Standard Bearer.



Our County Patron Air Chief Marshal Sir John Allison KCB CBE paid tribute to Brian for his dedicated service of 12 years as County Standard Bearer throughout which..

..'his bearing and turnout on all occasions has been ramrod straight and absolutely immaculate.

Even the most beady-eyed sergeant major would have found it impossible to fault him on anything at all....'

County intends to present Brian with a special award to acknowledge his outstanding service.

- The Branch was awarded a certificate of appreciation for best Newsletter in the County. Congratulations to editor Brigadier Malcolm Page and his trusty and hardworking deputy Anne Evans.
- It was reported that national RBL membership is down 4% to 230000. Our branch has so far bucked the trend with membership up 19% to 110 due largely to the efforts of your membership secretary Mollie Jeffrey.
- Nationally RBL received over one million calls for help. There are slightly fewer cases but the mental and physical needs are more expensive and complicated.

Attendance at the conference was poor and did not do justice to the new format i.e. sandwiches and drinks for all attendees before the start. The organisers hope in future to avoid timings clashing with the 6 Nations rugby competition!

I hope next year to encourage much better support from the branch for this worthwhile event.

Hohenzollern Redoubt (Auchy-les-Mines)

Members will recall that each year on 13th October John Green lays a wreath at the monument commemorating the disastrous battle in the last days of the Loos Campaign in 1915 in which his father fought.



John was invited to attend in WW1 uniform.



This year the village of Auchy-les-Mines was awarded a special medal by Emmanuel Macron (President of France) for the way in which the village organised the 100th anniversary commemoration in 2015 especially paying tribute to the 3000 killed and over 3000 wounded of the Black Watch including Capt Fergus Bowes-Lyon, brother of the late Queen Mother.

Gathering around the small enclosure, the crowd witnessed the unveiling of the new plaque dedicated to Major General George Thesiger, commanding 9th (Scottish) Division and Captain Fergus Bowes-Lyon of the 1/8th Black Watch who were both killed in the vicinity on the 26th and 27th September 1915.



Following the laying of wreaths, Last Post and a lament, the parade retraced its steps as far as the Auchy Sports Centre where the Maire, Madame Joëlle Fontaine offered the gathering refreshments.



Speeches were made, children sang and the afternoon was brought to a suitable close by the Black Watch musicians.

During the course of the war it is estimated 50,000 soldiers on all sides lost their lives here. The remains of many still lie there, undetected.

The Town Council of Auchy-les -Mines are now fighting a proposal to erect a wind-turbine farm on this sacred ground.





Poppy Appeal Report

I, together with the Committee of the Royal British Legion's Henley Branch, want to say a special thanks to all those individuals, businesses and groups who collected, contributed and supported the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal.

The final figure of the 2016 Poppy Appeal, that runs from 1 October 2016 – 30 September 2017, raised £25,488.51. The 2017 Poppy Appeal, which began on 1 October 2017, has raised £21,775.14, to date. A really tremendous effort from all those involved. The final figure will be available after the 30 September 2018.

While we are only part ways through the fundraising year, this is a fantastic amount and could not have been achieved without your support. There will be several events planned in 2018 and the Committee of the Henley Branch will circulate information soon.

A key event will include a Commemoration Concert, given by the Aliquando Choir in aid of the RBL Poppy Appeal to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War. This will take place on 10 November 2018 in St Mary's Church, Henley on Thames. Plans are progressing well, so please save the date in your diary and further information will be published soon.

As you are no doubt aware, the Legion, as Custodian of Remembrance ensures that the memories of those who have fought and sacrificed in the British Armed Forces, live on through the generations. The Legion provides lifelong support for British Armed Forces, men and woman, veterans and their families through its welfare work, to live on to a more hopeful future. This work can only take place with your support. Thank you once again.

Annie Arscott
Henley Poppy Appeal Organiser

Poppy Appeal Fundraising



**PLEASE WILL YOU SUPPORT MY
FUNDRAISING PARACHUTE JUMP
IN AID OF
THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION?**



POSTSCRIPT

Further to my appeal in the last newsletter (script below) I have learned since booking the event, that in fact I'm not doing a parachute jump, I'm doing a sky-dive. The main difference, I'm told, is that we jump out of a perfectly serviceable plane at 14,000' and free-fall for ages, rather than start at a lower altitude with the parachute opening immediately. Finally the parachute is activated during the skydive and we then land very gently on two feet and stroll away as nonchalantly as possible (as opposed to hitting the ground at speed and rolling over dramatically like in all the movies). You can guess that I prefer the skydive approach!

If you would be willing to support me but would prefer not to use the "Just Giving" method detailed below, of course **I would be very grateful for cash or your cheque** (payable to the Royal British Legion). I will collect all sponsorship contributions and forward the total to the Legion after 1st May (all being well!).

Please call me on 07768 851615 with any questions.



I hope to report back in due course!

Thank you so much!

Mollie

Henley Branch Membership Secretary

Winter Newsletter Script

Not to be completely outdone by Stan, John and David who have raised so much money for the Legion on the Nijmegen Marches, yet admittedly far less ambitiously I've signed up to do a parachute jump to raise funds for our Branch Poppy Appeal.

I'm not absolutely sure what got into me but at the launch of our Poppy Appeal in Henley market square on 28th October it suddenly seemed a terribly good idea to do this.

Somehow I convinced myself that it would be terrific to leap out of a plane at 14,000' in tandem with a handsome Red Devil. However terrifying the prospect seems to be now that I'm all booked in for 1st May 2018 at Old Sarum Airfield in Salisbury, there's no going back!

It would be wonderful if you would be willing to sponsor me in aid of the RBL by following this simple link to my JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/Mollie-Jeffrey>

Donating this way is simple, fast and totally secure. Your details are safe –JustGiving will never sell them on or send unwanted emails. Once you donate, they'll send your money directly to the charity. So it's the most efficient way to donate - saving time and cutting costs for the charity.

DATE - Sunday 5 August 2018 - Thursday 9 August 2018

LOCATION - Ypres, Belgium

In the biggest membership event in its history,
The Royal British Legion is recreating its 1928 pilgrimage
to World War One battlefields.

NB - Please go to our branch website (www.rbl-henley.org) and you will find a link to the main RBL website, where you will also see a video of the 1928 Pilgrimage - (Image credit: © Imperial War Museums (Q 47901))

Our branch will be represented by John Green carrying the branch standard. His grandson Edward will lay a wreath and he will be wearing his great-grandfather's WW1 medals.

Some idle jotting by Malcolm Page

I thought that I had a file of Branch Newsletters starting back to when I replaced 'Mac' Rutherford as Branch Chairman. I therefore suggested to Anne Evans that, to mark our winning 1st Place in the County Newsletter Competition, we should put together a history of the evolution of the Newsletter, starting with Mac Rutherford's last one.

In theory this should have been a quick job, but the file could not be found! I have therefore put together a history of the Branch over the period, with special reference to the Newsletter. Also, my computer is misbehaving and I am having to ask Anne to type the handwritten script!

I had not planned to become Chairman. We had two Rutherfords in the Branch, both seaman. 'Mac' was the Chairman. He was Fleet Air Arm and RNVR,; his station had been the Fleet Air Arm base at ????. He had a wealth of flying stories and held the MBE and DSC.

'Nic' by contrast was a professional seaman who was captain of a BP tanker and was the only one to fly the Blue Ensign indicating that the Captain was a member of the RNR.

Needless to say, the old saying about 'RNVR gentlemen trying to be sailors' and 'RNR sailors trying to be gentlemen' was well worn.

'Nic' was the natural choice to replace 'Mac' as Chairman, but he was not keen on having to deal with County and the higher echelons of the Legion. I did not know this when Mac told me that he wanted me to replace him as chairman. 'Nic' confirmed in a very definite manner that he was not interested when I spoke to him. As it happened, both Mac and I missed the next meeting, and when I read the Minutes, I found that I had been elected!

I had not thought much about what the job entailed, but I do recall that Mac used to produce an occasional Newsletter on his old computer. I decided to follow this example, but to enlist some aid. The Branch Secretary was Jim Green (husband of Heather) and his friend, neighbour and golfing partner was Bert Marsdon. Bert was a Sapper, I think, and he set to work with a will using a rather rickety printer that belonged to the Henley Volunteer Bureau, then based in Harpsden Church hall.

This arrangement survived the passing of both Bert and Jim. Heather, replaced Jim as Branch Secretary and I worked with her to print the Newsletter. It was a labour intensive operation to collate and staple them, especially as the office was cold and cramped. Members would collect their own and for a neighbour at a branch meeting, the rest were posted. 150 were printed four to six times a year, but the branch was getting smaller and also less active.

Meeting were held monthly at Swiss Farm and we lunched on bangers and mash for £2.50. The snag was that your clothes had to be sent to the dry cleaners afterwards!

Our programmes were influenced by our venues and these often changed for reasons outside our control. I cannot recall why we left Swiss Farm, but we moved to the Salisbury Club. There was some apprehension that some of our more left wing members might object, but once the price of beer became known, there was no protest. We were at the Salisbury Club at the time of the Queen's opening of the River & Rowing Museum. We formed up there with 6 Standards and about 60 of us marched to the R&R Museum to line the path Her Majesty took from the river - she had travelled from Phyllis Court Jetty with the Royal Waterman in all their finery. Just when we were to be introduced (I had 'Mac' as President and Ann Turner as Chair of the Welfare Committee and senior lady member beside me) her Majesty was distracted by a group of Children, leaving 'Mac' with outstretched hand and Ann with a half advanced foot!

From the Salisbury Club we moved to the Catherine Wheel where we were well looked after. Ann Turner arranged Christmas Lunch one year for £6 per person. But the place changed hands and the local management lost its autonomy and could not trim their prices to meet our pockets.

We then moved to the Rugby Club, an arrangement that suited us well but it was cold, however when they stopped catering in the summer, we had to find an alternative quickly. I think that was when we moved to Leander and eventual changes of committee members, John Green as Chairman, Anne Evans Treasurer, Stan Ainsley Membership Secretary. With the steady decline of membership and the increasing cost of events, we changed our tactics and started to have monthly lectures with drinks and lunch. Although we mostly invited speakers outside our membership, we were, and are still fortunate to have branch members who are willing to give an occasional talk and share their knowledge and experiences with us.

Leander, as a venue for our lunches was well liked by many, however, with dwindling membership, and increasing costs, our Treasurer suggested we move to the Christ Church Centre where she negotiated a most preferential rate with the Centre and so, with Doug's tasty lunches, plus a talk and a glass of wine as part of the deal, we continue to thrive there.

Over a period of time we have had many outings - to name a few more memorable ones such as boat trips on Hobbs newly acquired 'Waterman' when the catering was taken on by Ann Turner and Anne Duffy who fed us at market value. A splendid theatre trip to see 'Oh what a lovely war' at the Kenton with formal dress code and supper for about 80 in the Green Room. An outing to the RAF Cold War Museum at Cosford, and more recently a most fascinating trip to Bletchley Park and to the Soldier's of Oxford Museum at Woodstock,

Poppy Appeal plays a big part in our branch calendar of events. One cannot write about it with mentioning the truly amazing Brian Hughes who, just as an example in 2014 surpassed himself personally collecting £4 536.59 door to door and at his stationary post - almost a quarter of the final figure raised! We have had the most dedicated Poppy Appeal organizer in Shirley Lees. Her organisational skills and engaging personality were appreciated by all who worked with her over the poppy appeal launch and subsequent period of collecting. Shirley's success as our Organiser is reflected in the Appeal total during her term in office of over £168,000 . Over the 12 months of 2016/17 she handed the baton to Annie Arscott who is proving at least as innovative and enterprising as Shirley, so the Poppy Appeal is in good hands for the future.