

HENLEY & PEPPARD BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - NEWSLETTER
Summer - 2016



Editor - Malcolm Page (01491 578712)
malcolm.page55@btinternet.com
Assistant Editor – Anne Evans 01491 578238
2anne.evans@sky.com

Distribution - Stan Ainsley (07935 755905)
stanainsley@hotmail.com

Editorial

Rudyard Kipling

"This is the law of the jungle, as old and as true as the sky, And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the wolf that shall break it must die. As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk, the law runneth forward and back, The strength of the pack is the wolf and the strength of the wolf is the pack."

CONGRATULATIONS BRIAN!

Official Nomination by Julian Brookes

Outstanding Poppy Appeal Collector Brian is an outstanding Poppy Appeal collector and has personally raised £53,000 over a total of 20 years. He has received Certificates of Appreciation from the Branch, the County and in 2010 was awarded the Royal British Legion Gold Badge. Despite advancing years, he continues to collect in all weathers and his house-to-house and street collections still represent 40% of Henley Branch street collection total and 25% overall. He also collects regularly for the 1940 Dunkirk Veterans Association and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund

Remarkable Standard Bearer He has been Branch and County Standard Bearer for 12 years and Branch Committee member for almost 20 years.

He has carried the County Standard at 79 repatriations at John Radcliffe Hospital at the "final corner" thus honouring 175 service personnel killed in recent conflicts. Until recently he regularly carried the Standard at Commemorations for D-Day in Dunkirk and at the Menin Gate, Ypres

Local Community Servant He has visited schools on numerous occasions and regularly takes time to explain to youngsters the background and aims of the RBL. He continues to carry the Standard at local funerals of ex-service personnel and has done so for almost 20 years. Some local Branches no longer have Standard Bearers and Brian has trained-up a young Sergeant in the Air Cadets in drill and protocol to enable the Standards to be Paraded

Malcolm Page and Shirley and David Lees attended the presentation of the Town Medal to Brian Hughes on Friday 6 May in the Town Hall. Brian was nominated by the now Mayor (then Deputy Mayor) Julian Brookes and presented by the then Mayor, Lorraine Hillier.

In receiving the Town Medal, Brian said how proud he was to receive this recognition from the town where he was born and brought up, along with his parents before him and their parents before them.

All three of Brian's Poppy Appeal Organisers over the 20 years he has been collecting, includes Shirley's predecessor, Lt Col Stuart Thompson and his predecessor but one, Pamela Ward.



Breaking News

Poppy Appeal Organiser - We are sorry to announce that Shirley Lees our (PAO) has made a decision to relinquish her role as PAO after this year's Appeal. For the last four years she has planned and presided over an unprecedented period of successful fund raising. She will be a hard act to follow, however would you or do you know of someone who will volunteer to be her successor please speak to John Green

Branch and Membership Secretary – we are equally sorry that Stan Ainsley has also decided to stand-down at the end of this year. Stan has guided us through a landmine of new membership procedures and during his tenure the membership has grown substantially. So again volunteers are called for. These roles require a commitment and enthusiasm which reflect the Legion's motto Service Not Self.

HENLEY & PEPPARD BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - NEWSLETTER
Summer - 2016

Branch Events and Dates for your Diary

20 June
18 July
15 August
19 September
17 October

*13 November – Lunch only @ 12.30
19 December 2016 – **Christmas Lunch**

In general the timings are
as published below -**unless otherwise advised**

Talk 11.30 (Please be seated by 11.30)

Lunch 12.00 for 12.30

NB - All Branch Meetings, Lunches and Talks are held in the
Christ Church Centre - **unless otherwise advised**

-
- Monday 20 June** *Branch Lunch and Talk by Malcolm Page*
'Battle of Jutland'
Guests of Honour - The Mayor of Henley on Thames, Councillor, Julian Brookes and his wife, the Town Clerk, Janet Wheeler and Louise Hastings, have accepted our invitation to join us for lunch and a celebration to mark the Queen's 90th Birthday.
- Monday 18 July** *Branch Lunch and Talk by Alex Manning*
'The Somme – A War Walk'
- Monday 15 August** *Branch Lunch and Talk by Air Commodore (retired) Dr Tony Wober, museum guide at the National Maritime Museum in Sidney.*
"A Tour of Captain Cook's Endeavour"
Guest of Honour - Lynda Atkins, the new County Chairman
- Saturday 3 September** **'Town Hall Dance'** organised by Connie Butt to be held in the Town Hall with The Sound Force Big Band will be on a Rock'n Roll theme.
Tickets are £35 per head from Connie in the Over 60's Club or from Shirley.
Profits in aid of the Poppy Appeal.
- Monday 19 September** - *Branch Lunch and talk by Bill King*
'Dad's Underground Army'
- Monday 17 October** *Branch Lunch and talk by John Green*
'Further letters from my father from the Western Front'
- Weekends 28/10 to 12/11** *in the Old Fire Station Gallery*
A photographic essay on the First World War by Michael St Maur Sheil
'Fields of Battle Lands of Peace 1418'
We are seeking sponsorship for this exhibition. Please contact Shirley if you have any ideas for sponsors.
- Sunday 13 November** *Lunch only*
- Monday 19 December** *Christmas Lunch* 

HENLEY & PEPPARD BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - NEWSLETTER
Summer - 2016

Report on Previous Events

Monday 15 February 'The River Thames at War' Bill King gave an enthralling talk about the importance of the River Thames during WW1 including Hitler's plan to capture all 43 bridges from source to estuary. After prolonged applause Bill promised to give another talk in the future – now set for 19 September – so a definite date for your diary!

Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson the National President of the RBL was guest of honour. In a brief address he covered the highlights of his time in office and views about the future direction of the Legion. He emphasised that apart from fund raising and welfare, more effort should be made nationally to promote the benefits of the Legion as a membership organisation.

Monday 21 March – 'The Estates of Henley'

Elizabeth Hazeldine gave a fascinating gallop through the histories of the Estate of Henley and some of the characters that inhabited them, from a Polish religious order to one legged ladies.

Monday 18 April – 'Blind Veterans'

Those of us who were privileged to hear Brain Head talk about the sudden onset of total blindness some seven year ago, are not likely to forget the experience. Brian spoke of the circumstances leading up to the devastating event then explained the training he received enabling him to lead a life as independently as possible. Some of the gadgets are truly remarkable, for example a Speaking Watch, a devise which detects colours, and an especially sensitive walking cane. Brian also spoke about the help and encouragement he has received from Blind Veterans UK. His positivity has achieved remarkable things of which those of us who are fortunate to be sighted would be proud.

Wednesday 21 April 2016 - Visit to Bletchley Park

Shirley Lees, with admirable support from David, kindly arranged a visit to Bletchley Park, for us to see the wonders of war-time decryption and translation of enemy radio messages, German, Italian and - later - Japanese.

The coach was full and we had the added benefit of Jean Rook's company. (did anyone see Jean being interviewed recently on TV? - do ask her about it !!) On the return journey she kindly answered questions about her service with the WRNS at Bletchley.

The weather was good, the coach comfortable, the journey uneventful and the venue quite fascinating. We all had a full and instructive day and left in awe of the intellectual capacity that had been concentrated there so quickly and to such good effect. Also the cutting edge of technology that laid the foundations for the computer industry. Without it all, Allied losses would have been greater and the war would have lasted a year or two longer. Many thanks to Shirley, Jane and David, and of course our TV star!!

Monday 16 May - 'Grandma flew Spitfires - The Air Transport Auxiliary at White Waltham

Richard Poad of Maidenhead Heritage Centre gave an excellent and fascinating talk on 'Grandma Flew Spitfires'. It is an amazing tale of determination, bravery and some foolhardiness, but what an important contribution the ATA made to WW2. Everyone commented afterwards on how much they had enjoyed it. I am sure many Branch members will be inspired to visit the exhibition and try out the Spitfire simulator!

HENLEY & PEPPARD BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - NEWSLETTER
Summer - 2016

News

The Queen's 90th Birthday

The Chairman read-out the letter of congratulations and loyalty the branch sent to Her Majesty marking her 90th Birthday. This was greeted by applause.

Since then we have received a letter from the Queen, a copy of which is attached.

The Committee decided that our lunch scheduled for June 20th would be a 'Birthday Party'. RBL Headquarters are sending a special pack of bunting so we can decorate appropriately.

Cadet Affiliation

We are grateful to Alex Manning who has agreed to become Cadet Liaison Officer with the object of maintaining direct contact with the Sea, Army and Air Cadets in order to explore how best we can meaningfully support each other's activities.

What's in a Name?

Still no decision made as to the official name of the new Townlands, but 'Townlands Memorial Hospital' is gaining support. There are petitions to sign in the Over 60's Club, The Christ Church Centre, Hot Gossip, Richard Way booksellers & the Bell Bookshop

The "Vierdaagse" (Dutch for "four-day event") Hurrah! After 2 years of disappointment John and Stan are delighted to report that they have been accepted to walk 'The Walk' as a sponsored event for the Poppy Appeal. The walk has taken place each year, apart from WW2, since 1909 based on 'Nijmegen'. Participants must walk up to 50k (30 miles) per day for four consecutive days!

John and Stan are putting their bodies on the line for the Poppy Appeal (if you don't recognise them, they are the two with a disgraceful tan!) Do speak to them and even if you think they are bonkers sign up to sponsor them – there will be an opportunity to do so at the next meeting on 20 June and information about Just-Giving will be sent to those who sign up and have internet access.

Welfare

A Welfare Committee has been formed under the leadership of Nick Launders.

Since the Royal British Legion opened its help line (0808 802 8080) there has been a lively debate concerning the part that branches and their members should play. It would be all too easy to forget about the needs of our 'neighbours' and just say to them "phone the help line." Our branch, however, would have none of it and formed a welfare sub-committee. This group has come up with several points which are worth repeating. If you need help or a friend is in need and you need help;-

- If in doubt phone the Royal British Legion Helpline. It is open **8am to 8pm, 7 days a week** (calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks) for all enquiries.
- If you prefer, contact a branch committee member, the coordinator of the welfare committee is Nick Launders 01491 628243 – or email nicklaunders@gmail.com
- Many of us are too proud to ask for help and we suffer in silence, so let us all be alert and try to tactfully offer support when it is obvious that help is needed. We may not be able to help directly but there are many sources of help in our Town, which is renowned for its many and varied charities.

Finally - we need your help. If you feel welfare is your strong suit, then please help us, indeed help us if it is not. Confidentiality and tact are paramount and we must try to be as unobtrusive as possible but it is essential that we build an effective welfare network in our area. Contact Nick if you feel able to help in anyway.

HENLEY & PEPPARD BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - NEWSLETTER
Summer - 2016

Mrs "Pat" Rutherford

Sadly, Pat Rutherford has died on the 9th April 2016 at the age of 94. For the past three years, after her husband Nic died, she had been living in a very friendly care home in Chingford, near her son Stuart and daughter-in-law Linda. During the 1939-45 war she served in the WRNS and met Nic when they were both stationed in Ceylon. Pat was a telegraphist, employed on intercepting Japanese radio signals and recording the messages. The Japanese had to transmit using the Roman alphabet, with six additional symbols. The recorded messages were passed to Bletchley Park for de-cryption and translation. Because of this link, Pat was awarded the Bletchley Park badge.

Nic was then a Merchant Navy cadet and used to recall the indignation of more senior officers when he joined them in the queue outside the "Wrenery" in search of company. They married after they returned to the UK and Nic concentrated on his career, both with the BP shipping fleet and in the Royal Navy Reserve. In the latter he achieved the rank of Captain and was appointed an Honorary ADC to the Queen while Pat brought up their two sons in UK. Later, when Nic was promoted to Master (Captain) she would sometimes accompany him on his voyages, occupying herself by playing bridge.

Nic and Pat moved to Henley on Thames in 1971 and were among the first residents in Ancastle Green. Nic was a member of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners and, in due course became the Master (of the Masters). This entitled them to have the use of the Master's quarters on the HQ ship "Wellington" which is moored on the Embankment with her bow in the City of London and her stern in the City of Westminster. Nic retired in 1979 and they both joined Phyllis Court that year. This was a very happy period for them. Pat and Nic were both Life Members of Phyllis Court Club, where Pat enjoyed playing bridge and scrabble. Nic was Vice Chairman of our Branch for some 15 years and Pat and he were constant attenders at our events. Pat is survived by her two sons, Stuart in Chingford and Andrew in Sydney, Australia.

Mrs Mavis Wheeler (nee James)

Sadly, Mavis Wheeler died on 16 April 2016, aged 86. Henley's last link with D Day! For the last two years of her life, she had been a resident at a care home in Huntercombe. She had first lived in Nettlebed after the war, when she went there from London to be a member of the Womens Land Army. It was there that she met and married Harry Wheeler, who was a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Harry had been one of three Sappers who were in the first glider to land in France on 6 June 1944, at what is now called Pegasus Bridge. The other occupants of the glider were members of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, under the command of Major John Howard. There were five other gliders in the operation. Harry's glider landed just before dawn, at almost 100 mph. Smashing through the anti-landing defences (known as Rommel's Asparagus) they came to rest some 100 yards short of the bridge, a superb feat of airmanship. It was critical to the Allied plan that the bridge was captured intact, so that our tank forces could expand the bridgehead rapidly to the East. While the infantry captured the bridge, Harry and his two companions were busy beneath it, disabling the explosive charges that the Germans had laid. Harry accidentally cut through a high-voltage cable, which caused him to fall into the canal.

The bridge was counter attacked frequently by German troops, including once by water. It was also hit by an aircraft bomb, which caused a dent but otherwise no damage. They held the bridge for several hours, until they were relieved by Lord Lovat's Commando Brigade, which had landed on a beach and marched inland for several miles, almost unopposed.

Mavis and Harry married in Nettlebed on 27 August 1949. At first they lived in Nettlebed, but moved into Henley in 1972. Harry died over two years ago. Mavis is survived by her five children, Derek, Sylvia, Colin, Denise and Sean. There are eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

**HENLEY & PEPPARD BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - NEWSLETTER
Summer - 2016**



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Blaker,
Henley-on-Thames and Peppard Branch,
The Royal British Legion.

I much appreciated the kind words you have sent on the occasion of my
ninetieth birthday.

As your Patron, I was grateful for your thoughtfulness in writing as you
did and, in return, send you all my warm good wishes.

ELIZABETH R.

21st April, 2016.