

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



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Editorial

We opened the New Year with a lively meeting and lunch at the Christ Church Centre, when our guests were the outgoing Town Clerk (Mike Kennedy) and his wife Glynnis. We look forward to welcoming his successor. She has been appointed, but will not be in office until April.

Stop Press!

Thursday 11 February – Funeral at 1530 in Rotherfield Greys Church

Jim Langley sadly died at the age of 100. The Branch will be represented and both Brian and Colin have offered to parade their Standards.

Members will remember him for his riveting talk to us some years ago about his career, including his being taken prisoner in the Western Desert and sent to Italy.

He managed to escape, while travelling (with other POWs) by train and reached Switzerland, where he was accommodated with a German speaking Swiss family. The husband was a banker and soon the War Office was remitting Jim's pay to him monthly. After a year or more, during which time his knowledge of the German language improved immeasurably, D Day came and Jim was eventually evacuated via the South of France to UK.

Here he was assigned to an Allied Forces Captured Documents Unit and sent to Grand Admiral Donetz's headquarters at Flensburg, where he spent time translating the plans for Operation Sealion, the German invasion of UK. He said that the German Navy and Army had signalled readiness and all turned on the Luftwaffe, who were embroiled in the Battle of Britain.

The plans for the future of UK, had the invasion been successful, were horrendous.

His talk was fluently delivered without notes and lasted for an hour. He was vexed when I said that there was no time for questions.

After the war ended, Jim resumed his law studies and eventually founded what became a successful firm of solicitors in London. Jim lived on his family farm, in the successfully converted dairy unit.

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Monday 15 February - Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB CVO

In February our guests will be Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB CVO and the RBL manager for SE Region, Mike Collins. Admiral Peter has been at the helm of the Legion for five years. He joined the Britannia Royal Naval College as a University Cadet in 1975. After being commissioned, he followed a Cold War career, through diesel, Polaris and Hunter-Killer submarines.

Subsequent appointments included Captain of the Second Submarine Squadron, Director of Naval Service Conditions, Naval Secretary, Defence Services Secretary and finally Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel).

Retiring in 2010, he is involved in a host of Service charities, including a being trustee of the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. He lives with his wife Tracey at Warshash Hants. They have two daughters.

He has been asked to speak (briefly) during coffee, on the most memorial events during his time as National President

Branch Meetings & Lunches

~~18 January 2016~~

15 February

21 March

18 April

16 May

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

Lunch 12.00 for 12.30

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

unless otherwise advised

Branch Events and Dates for your Diary

Monday 15 February *Branch lunch and Talk by Bill King*
'The River Thames at War'

Monday 21 March *Branch Lunch and Talk by Elizabeth Hazeldine - local historian*
'The Estates of Henley'

Monday 18 April *Branch Lunch and Talk by Brian Head*
'Blind Veterans' and his own experience of living with visual impairment

Thursday 21 April **'Bletchley Park Trip'** (resurrected)
Please read details below and book early!

Monday 16 May *Branch Lunch and Talk by Richard Poad of Maidenhead Heritage Centre*

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

Monday 20 June *Branch Lunch and Talk by Malcolm Page*
'Battle of Jutland'

Monday 18 July *Branch Lunch and Talk by Alex Manning*
'The Somme – a War Walk'

Bletchley Park Trip *(resurrected)*

The branch will be visiting the home of the Codebreakers and the first computer, Alan Turing, and where our local branch member Jean Rook was stationed during the war. If any member is aware of anybody who would wish to attend but requires financial assistance, please speak to a committee member. Similarly, please discuss any disability requirements or needs for transport to/from Henley station."

Details are as follows:

Transport

Coach departs Henley-on-Thames Station Car Park at 9am & returns around 6pm

Cost

£35 per person which includes travel and entrance fee to Bletchley.

You can also pre-order a guide book for £3.50. Please confirm your guide book order at the time of booking and include it in your payment total.

Booking & Payment

Cheque for the total sum as appropriate, to be made payable to The Royal British Legion, Henley Branch and sent to our Treasurer, Martin Goodier, 16 Reades Lane, Sonning Common, RG4 9LP. Alternatively, you can hand Martin your cheque at the next Branch Lunch.

PS –Just to forewarn members that there is a fair bit of walking involved at Bletchley.

Please let us know if any assistance is required or if transport is needed to/from Henley station.

News from the Chair

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

County Chairman – We are delighted to report that the new County Chairman, Lynda Atkins has accepted our invitation to join us for lunch at our August 15th meeting.

Welfare Committee

A Welfare Committee is being formed under the leadership of Nick Lauanders.



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What's in a Name?

At our previous Branch Committee meeting Brian Hughes reminded us that the original War Memorial Hospital was largely funded by public subscription and that the new Townlands is a direct descendant of the original. It is felt therefore that the word 'Memorial' should be maintained in its title. On the 27th of January your Chairman John Green wrote to Councillor J Reissman, who is part of the Steering Committee, asking for clarification and updating on this issue.

The "Vierdaagse" 4 day event - This is a walk which 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!

For the past two years Stan Ainsley and John Green have unsuccessfully applied to join the 45,000 walkers as a sponsored event for the Poppy Appeal. They have high hopes of being accepted for this year's challenge in July.

Third time lucky? watch this space for further details!

This & That

Extracts from a letter written by Sgt W L Green to his mother February 1916 on return to "somewhere in France"

... still in the best of health and spirits considering the circumstances which is somewhat depressing after the sunny south...

I am writing to you from one of the typical farm houses which I have described before....as usual when billeted in barns etc the boys always take the kitchen by storm for a little comfort which the lamplight and fire affords. There are over a dozen of us in this little kitchen. At present two of us are writing and the remainder are singing and kicking-up a row which is not conducive to concentration for letter writing.....

...not much news that would pass the censor but the last actions have somewhat dampened our enthusiasm. A church service was held last Sunday in the paddock of a Chateau (used as Brigade HQ) we parade in greatcoats in a thick cold mist.....

...please send a shirt in your next parcel

...they say the last seven years of this war will be the worst. I don't think!
Never mind, as the song says 'there's a silver lining through the dark clouds shining.....'

Yours loving soldier son.
Leslie