



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Harwell Branch

BRI805

**Monthly Branch Committee Meeting
Held on 20th March 2025
In the Committee Room at the Village Hall High Street Harwell
At 17.15 Hours.**

ATTENDANCE:

R. White (RW) - President
T. Pearson (TP) - Chair
P. A. Cox (PC) - Secretary, Harwell Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO) and Welfare Representative.
S. T. Haycox (SH) - Treasurer

COMMITTEE: H. Benton, (HB) J. Capone (JC)

1. WELCOME

T Pearson opened the meeting.

2. EXHORTATION AND KOHIMA EPITAPH

Reginald White gave the Exhortation and silent tribute; he ended with the Kohima Epitaph.

3. APOLOGIES: J. G. Street.

4. MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING

There were no corrections. The minutes were approved as a true record and signed by T Pearson.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FEBRUARY 2025 MINUTES

All covered in the following items.

6. FULL BRANCH MEETING

T Pearson proposed that we have a big push for new members and Committee members at the Harwell Feast on 26th May, then call a full Branch meeting after that.

Agreed

Action: T Pearson to contact the Harwellian in due course.

7. FUTURE OF THE BRANCH

7.1 Community Awareness Events - Harwell Feast 26th May 2025.

T Pearson said that we should have a big push for visibility at the Harwell Feast. Discussion ensued:

- Committee members have folding tables, a gazebo etc.
- We could have military vehicles present such as the Ferret that attends D Day, or a committee member knows someone with a jeep.
- VE Day Commemorations could help with recruitment.
- We could ask reenactors e.g. the group that attends D Day Commemoration to attend and explain the RBL.

ACTION: T Pearson to liaise with Feast Committee and J Capone / Didcot ACF.

ACTION: S Haycox to contact reenactors and jeep owner.

7.2 Promotional Leaflets and Materials

P Cox said that the County Membership Support Officer (CMSO) Phil Davies has ordered stock which we now have: “How we help” and “Becoming a member” leaflets, adult wristbands, key rings and cloth bags.

7.3 Social Media Posts

P Cox has sent a query to the RBL HQ Social Media team to see if there are any standard messages to use for recruitment etc. No reply yet.

7.4 Article

P Cox had modified the letter to the membership about possible branch closure to include the points described in the February meeting including well-known former members, Poppy Appeal funds raised, and Branch history, to show what will be lost if the Branch closes. He distributed copies to the Committee.

Discussion ensued:

- Committee members agreed with most of the wording as written.
- The wording should be modified to include an appeal for new members.
- The article should be published as widely as possible including all local newsletters, clubs, shops and churches.
- A QR code to take people to the membership page could be included, with a note that Harwell Branch is in the Berkshire County.
- You could have the “Your Country Needs You” suitably modified as a watermark.

Action: P Cox to adapt letter and distribute.

8. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY AND ARMISTICE 2024

P Cox has sent the final letter of thanks, to the first aider, and distributed the final timetable.

9. NEW ARTWORK AT THE RAF HARWELL MEMORIAL STONE

9.1 Background

P Cox described the background as he understood it: The Committee was not meeting, and decisions were being taken by email and phone call.

Meeting with Campus

Peter Davies, who is the Campus contact about the D Day Commemorations, was told in confidence in early 2024 that the Campus management were considering redesigning the gardens around the War Memorial.

He received an invitation in **August 2024** to a confidential meeting with the Campus about the design and artwork and asked if anyone else be consulted. This was circulated to P Cox, H Benton and possibly R White.

The meeting took place in **September 2024**. P Davies was shown the design selected by the Campus management and asked to comment on historical aspects only. It consists of seven large metal hoops representing the fuselage frames of a Horsa glider, centred over the path to the Memorial.

From September to November 2024, the Branch Committee members were busy with the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Parade and service. Also, P Davies stood down as Parade Marshal in early November, and R White had already stood down as Chair, leaving the committee short on numbers.

Monthly Branch committee meetings resumed in December 2024. We have concentrated on forming a committee and then engaging the community to keep the Branch going.

Planning Application and Reactions

The planning application for the artwork was submitted in February. It is in a different place to that described in September - to the side of the path to the memorial stone, and not pointing to the Stone.

P Davies has sent a briefing to the Committee on the plans for the Artwork and the September meeting.

26 comments were made on the application on the Vale District Council website. Some are in favour, some are just against the position of the artwork, some wanted extra structure e.g. benches to make it clear what the artwork is, and others are against the whole concept.

The "Save the RAF Harwell Heritage" group have publicised this widely on various local facebook pages generating a lot of interest and comment.

***Note:** This group campaigned in 2023 for the new Moderna buildings to avoid the end of the old RAF runway opposite the stone and the buried remains of the experimental aircraft catapult.*

The group asked the Branch to participate in their campaign and a protest at the memorial to which the press was invited. We consulted the County RBL and were told not to participate as an RBL Branch. (Also, any media contact must be cleared in advance by the HQ media team).

Discussion ensued:

- T Pearson said that people wrongly think that P Davies had approved of the artwork on behalf of the RBL. In fact, we are not happy with either artwork itself or the position of the artwork as in the planning application or both.
- H Benton said that Chilton Parish Council had asked her if the Branch had approved the change in design. She asked P Davies, who said that he had not heard from the Campus since the September meeting and is not happy with the change in position.

- The Standards will not fit through the hoops when paraded to the Memorial.
- The new position of the artwork is strange as it no longer points to the memorial.
- The Campus' idea was that the rest of the campus has been updated and is new and modern, so the memorial gardens should be redesigned as well.
- A memorial does not have to look modern.
- The alternative designs suggested are not necessarily better.
- *If we object, will the work be delayed and still be in progress on the D Day Commemoration?* H Benton said that the campus is planning to avoid any work taking place on that day.
- A story board could be put up to explain the artwork.
- T Pearson said that the consultation period had closed, but we could still submit our opinion and object to where it is sited. They may go ahead anyway though.

T Pearson suggested that the Chilton Parish Council could ask the District Council to call in the application - so it is discussed by the planning committee rather than an individual planning officer.

10. D DAY 2025

10.1 Guest of Honour

The committee discussed a proposal by P Davies. It was felt that this proposal would cause further upset locally. The Committee discussed asking other dignitaries who usually attend. It was agreed to ask Lynda Atkins as she is National Vice-Chair, a Deputy Lord-Lieutenant and is now a candidate for National Chair.

PROPOSAL: That Linda Akins is invited to be Guest of Honour at the D Day service on Saturday 7th June 2025.

Proposed: T Pearson

Seconded: S Haycox

Agreed Unanimously

ACTION: P Cox to inform P Davies.

10.2 Invitation List

P Cox reported that P Davies had proposed the following list and a draft invitation. The list is similar to previous years:

Councils

Vale of the White Horse District Council
Abingdon / Didcot / Wantage Mayors

Chilton and Harwell Parish Councils

Military

Dalton Barracks (4 & 7 Regt RLC)
Vauxhall Barracks (11 EOD&S Regt RLC)

RAF Benson

Veterans Groups

National RBL - Lynda Atkins
Berks & Oxon County RBL
Harwell / Faringdon / Steventon RBL
RBL Riders Branch
Glider Pilots Regiment Society
Night Fright (C-37 restoration project)

Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light
Infantry Association.
Parachute Regiment Association
Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)
Red Line Home Guard
Soldier Sailors Airmen Families
Association

Youth

Air Cadets (Didcot and Wantage)
Army Cadets (Neville Company)

2nd Chilton Scouts
Chilton School

Campus

Civil Nuclear Constabulary
Thames Valley Police
Harwell Campus
Diamond Light Source
Harwell Laboratories Recreation
Association
Medical Research Council

Nuclear Restoration Services (Formally
Magnox)
Research Complex at Harwell
ResMed
Science and Technology Facilities Council
UK Health Security Agency (Formally
public health England)

Other

Didcot Rotary Club
Didcot Twinning Association
Harwellian Club

Valerian Court Care Home
Ferret Driver (invited to attend with the
armoured car)

T Pearson had agreed to this list, and P Davies has sent off all the invitations apart from the Campus group.

P Davies is now liaising with the Campus management to get formal agreement to hold the Commemoration, agree car parking and other details. P Cox will send the Campus invitations once agreement has been given.

10.3 Timetable

P Cox has drafted a timetable and will circulate it shortly.

10.4 Wreaths and Bucket Collection

P Cox has composed a wreath information sheet for attendees. There is no special D Day wreath this year. The Poppy Appeal warehouse may be busy with sending out VE80 and VJ80 merchandise and bunting etc so he will submit the orders for wreaths in good time.

H Benton can attend, either to do a bucket collection, or as P Cox's stand in distributing wreaths if required. P Cox has requested a payment card machine from the Berkshire and Vale Poppy Appeal manager Sarah Brown.

10.5 Flypast - See Treasurer's report item 15.2.

11. VE AND VJ DAY

11.1 VE Day Thursday 8th May 2025

T Pearson said that she was not aware of anything organised in Harwell. H Benton said that she was attending a meeting directly after this meeting where any plans for Chilton would be discussed.

H Benton and P Cox said that funds and bunting etc are available. It is suggested that street parties are held on the Monday 5th and some are being organised. E.g. bring your own picnic.

J Capone said that we could organise and advertise something like this at the recreation ground on bank holiday Monday.

P Cox said that we have received some VE80 and Poppy 2025 pin badges. H Benton requested half of the VE pin badges for Chilton events.

T Pearson said that she will post on the Harwell Facebook asking if anyone is organising a VE Day event.

11.2 VJ Day Friday 15th August 2025

T Pearson proposed that we discuss this at a Branch meeting nearer to the date.

Agreed.

12. ARCHIVE BOXES AT THE HARWELLIAN CLUB

T. Pearson said that she has looked through the archive boxes, and most of the contents tallies up with the list P Cox had provided. There were no small RBL or Legion flags (which used to be on the top table at meetings) and no bunting or tablecloth. There is a lot of RBL Club items.

She will meet with Kath Luker and go through the boxes, then suitable items will be taken to the Oxford History Centre.

P Cox said that he had another look in bag from Sandra Pateman (his predecessor). There are counterfoils from members applications as well as membership lists (to be shredded) and a load of envelopes. He has not done the shredding yet.

ACTION: T Pearson to liaise with K Luker.

ACTION: P Cox to shred membership lists and other documents as appropriate.

13. SECRETARY'S REPORT

P Cox reported:

13.1 Minutes

The names of committee members were used in the February 2025 instead of the Office or role names, and actions are noted (suggested by T Pearson).

13.2 Website

The February draft minutes have been posted on the website. The next payment for the domain name is due in May. P Cox has not yet looked at the charity hosting option by Krystal.

13.3 Printing.

P Cox has printed and distributed the agenda for this meeting, the February 2025 Minutes and County newsletter. Low printing volume this month again.

13.4 Welfare

Following an enquiry at the last meeting, P Cox has found and checked contacts for the Legion, the Soldiers Sailors and Airmen Families Association (SSAFA) and an appropriate service-related organisation. He has passed these to the contact of the person.

13.5 Meeting Room - See Treasurers report item 15.3.

14. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

P Cox reported: **Branch Membership is unchanged at 44.**

14.1 Renewals

All members except one have renewed until late October 2025, some of these are paid up until early 2026. P Cox thanked all for renewing.

14.2 Welcome Letter to New Members.

In hand.

ACTION: P Cox to write letter.

15. TREASURER'S REPORT

S Haycox reported:

15.1 Branch Funds

Funds held according to the latest statements are:

HARWELL BRANCH

Branch Funds Initiative (BFI). Account	£ 357.73
Current Account:	<u>£ 380.17</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£ 737.90</u>

The transfer of £201 to the Gardening Club for the Soldier Silhouette has been made.

15.2 Legacy Transfer for Flypast

T Pearson said that as the flypast cost £300 last year, we should draw down £500 from the legacy to cover the cost and give a contingency for any increases in costs. We only just have enough funds available. The transfer is to top the current account up.

P Cox said that he had found and completed the Legacy trust fund transfer form. The description is for Commemoration of the fallen that set off from RAF Harwell and all who participated in D Day. Any surplus funds will be used for branch administration and payment for wreaths. A couple of minor changes to the form were requested.

The form is submitted to County for approval. If they approve it is sent to National HQ for final approval and the transfer to be made.

H Benton said that we need to do this quickly. T Pearson said that we should submit the form to County as soon as possible. If they approve, we should ask P Davies to go ahead with arrangements as the National Committee would be unlikely to reject something County had approved.

Agreed

ACTIONS: P Cox to amend and reprint form. S Haycox to sign form. P Cox to send form and ask County to let us know if they approve or reject it.

S Haycox said that now we have easier access to the Legacy account we should use the funds. He had the chequebook available to pay any expenses.

15.3 Meeting Room

P Cox booked and paid for the meeting room for this meeting. £12.60 for 2 hours, which is the minimum time. He aims to get a system sorted with S Haycox so we can pay the Village Hall account directly from the Branch current account by BACS.

He provided the invoices for all the payments to the Village Hall and expenses vouchers, which he handed to S Haycox after the meeting. He apologised for not providing these sooner.

T Pearson suggested that a new Village Hall account should be created to book the room using the Treasurer's email address, so he gets the invoices directly.

ACTION: P Cox to create new account.

16. CORRESPONDENCE

P Cox reported that correspondence received since the February meeting includes:

16.1 Correspondence from Legion County Office and National Headquarters:

- **Membership Newsletter February 2025**
- **Central News March 2025**
- **County Newsletter February 2025**
- **Emails sent in Error to Annual Conference Delegates** - Problem now fixed.
- **Annual Conference 2025 Jim Prince Fund** - Grants for smaller branches with low funds to send delegates to Annual Conference.
- **Grants available for VE and VJ 80 from Berkshire County** Also general event guide, spend guides, and PLI certificate.
- **Voting is now open for National Officers, Trustees and Membership Council Representatives** – list of Candidates, Link for CVs and voting instructions - See AOB item 20.2. Vote by 15th April.
- **Presentation by Lieutenant General James Bashall, CB, CBE - The Royal British Legion Yesterday and Today** - Kingsclere RBL Friday 4th April at 7:30pm. Tickets £5. Raising money for the RBL. £1000 worth of raffle prizes. Tickets still available.

16.2 Correspondence from Other Organisations

- **March 2025 Chilton Chronicle.**
- **Grand Opening of Oxford Manor Care Home's Rehabilitation Service 1st May 2025**

This does not appear to be for Veterans in particular, and does not appear to be free, so we cannot endorse or circulate this. (Unlike the weekly veterans breakfasts last year).

Agreed.

17. CEREMONIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

J Capone will register on the RBL's "Discover" training portal and look at the training required and available for his roles.

T Pearson has already registered and has taken a couple of courses, with another booked.

18. STANDARD BEARER'S REPORT

The Standard has not been paraded since the last meeting.

19. POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER'S REPORT

No donations have been received since the last meeting.

19.1 D Day 2024 report

One wreath payment is awaiting confirmation. It is by invoice so likely to have been paid. P Cox will check now the invitations have gone out.

19.2 D Day 2025

See item 10.5.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

20.1 Further Awards

The Branch Committee discussed awards that could be made to Branch Members, and progress to date.

20.2 Voting for National Officers, Trustees and Membership Council Representatives.

We have received the following information:

- The new National Vice Chair and some of the area representatives have been elected unopposed, and some areas had no nominees.
- The Branch can vote for the National Chair and 3 trustees.
- Link to Candidates election statements
- Link from Civica to vote online. Deadline is Mon 14th April.
- Branches should agree their votes at a full branch meeting.

H Benton said that as we are not yet holding full branch meetings, we should decide as a committee on behalf of the Branch at this meeting. **Agreed**

P Cox said that P Davies had submitted a suggestion that we vote for Linda Atkins as Chair, Jim Sibbald. and John Thornhill as trustees, leaving one more to vote for.

It was proposed that the Branch vote as suggested by P Davies. **Agreed**

ACTION: P Cox to submit vote to Civica.

21. DECIDE DATE AND VENUE OF APRIL MEETING

21.1 April Committee Meeting

T Pearson suggested that we meet on 17th March 2025 at 5:15pm in the Village Hall Committee Room.

Agreed.

ACTION: P Cox to book room for 17th April.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 18:22 hours.

Minutes approved at the Branch meeting held on _____

Chair _____