



"SANDBAG"

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

Volume 15 Issue 1

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January 2019

Poppy Appeal 2017 - another record broken

Dawn tells me her full accounts for Poppy Appeal 2017 have come in and it is a staggering £18,150.66. She wishes me to thank all those who helped achieve this wonderful amount which is yet another record for Wincanton branch. I think I must say now though how grateful we all are to Dawn for all her efforts in making this possible - thanks Dawn and a sincere thank you to everyone involved, especially Teresa who put so much work into the Poppy Appeal 2017/18. Dawn says she will be getting the working group together to chat about how we handle 2019. The current Poppy Appeal from October 2018 is still active until next October and it is good to hear that we are well on track. The total so far for 2018 stands at £15,600 and there is still money coming in as well as the planned fundraising events we will have in 2019.

Sea Cadet collection Wincanton Racecourse



Steve and his daughter Hannah again joined our adopted Sea Cadets on 10th November at Wincanton Racecourse and collected £1529.29. We are always so grateful to the Sea Cadets for their help and indeed to Steve and Hannah for not only being there but helping count the collections too ! We are fortunate to have such good young people helping us. We are also pleased to say that collections at Morrison's topped £9000 this year.

It is the soldier

It must be ten years ago that I stumbled across this piece of verse, I believe it originates in America but it more than applies to us in the United Kingdom. I do not apologise for repeating it and ask our senior members to bear with me if they remember it. With the constant stream of negative news I think it worth repeating and remembering that it is our military, Army, Navy and Air Force this actually fully applies to :-

It is the soldier, not the reporter,
Who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the soldier, not the poet,
Who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the soldier, not the campus organizer,
Who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.
It is the soldier, Who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is
draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn
the flag.
Please remember this ! Whenever we have a
problem in this Country we always know who to
turn to.

Thank you to our military

Your input please

A while back many members shared with us experiences and stories of their time in the military. In the old days I was flooded with members contacting me or me being able to contact them. For some reason this has dried up so I would appreciate it if you could think about it. If you remember stories of The Rhine Army, or Aldershot or Catterick etc., please share with us. I do realise that all memories may not be pleasant but if you have stories we would appreciate it.

Remembrance

When I transferred to Wincanton RBL branch in 2004 there were many “characters” and lots of veterans of the Second World War and Korean War amongst our members. I was very privileged to have heard their stories and anecdotes and I was very fortunate to have had knowledge of those who fought and came home. I was also given some responsibility too which I gave my word to uphold and that was not only the “memories they had” but I said I would pass on their knowledge to future generations. One responsibility I take very seriously is ensuring the military graves in Wincanton Cemetery are well cared for. Fortunately as Steve is parks supervisor for the Town Council I know all is in safe hands when I need to hand things over but I am not sure that everyone realises that we do have military graves in the cemetery and how they came to be there. During the First World War Wincanton had a small hospital caring for soldiers wounded on the Western Front and sadly two of them died there. There is also the grave of George Dove who died in Bermondsey Military Hospital London, he died there from the effects of gas on 24th October 1918. He was born in Wincanton and his brother was the cemetery keeper, his brother successfully obtained permission from the military authorities to have him buried in Wincanton. There is also a grave of a member of the Royal Air Force and to date we have not been able to find out the story.

There is also a private grave of Doctor Leonard and Mrs. Suzanne Buckley. Dr. Buckley was the respected town GP who volunteered for the Army in 1940 and both were killed during an enemy bombing raid on Stanmore, headquarters of the Royal Air Force near where they were living.

**NatWest Bank in South Street
May 1944**



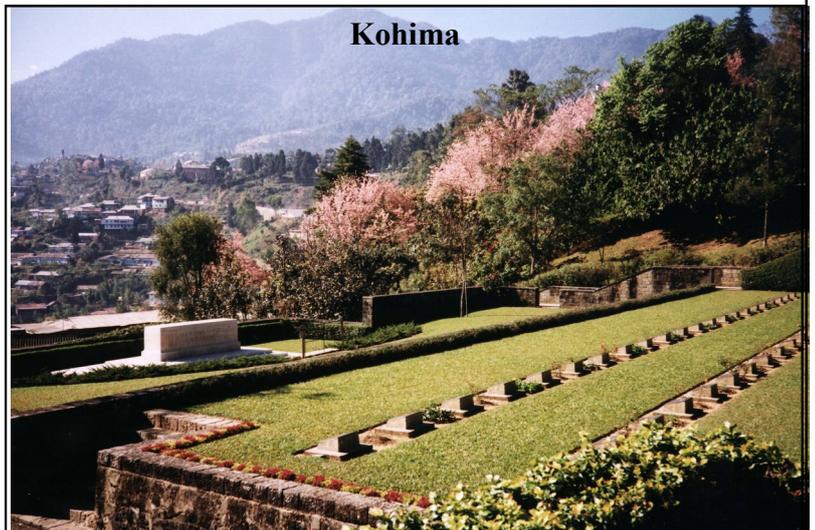
William Atkins

We have been occupied over the last four years with anniversaries and events connected with the First World War but 2019 will be another full year of anniversaries being the 75th anniversary of events in 1944 - a year which saw the Normandy Landings, the crash of the American Flying Fortress “Old Faithful” and the enemy bombing of Wincanton at Whitsun 1944 by a lone German aircraft. It was also during that year that several Wincanton soldiers lost their lives in not only the invasion of Europe after Normandy but in horrendous fighting against the Japanese in the Far East where local regiments fought at the Battle of Kohima in Burma. One such soldier was Tony Fraser of West Hill, who served with the Dorset Regiment and was killed on 2nd May 1944 at that infamous battle. Another is William Atkins (one

of the
“Atkins
boys” after

whom Atkins Hill is named) he was killed at the Anzio Landings in Italy also in May 1944.

We do not yet know exactly how we will commemorate the main anniversaries in 2019 but we will certainly do our best.



Kohima

Remembrance Sunday 2018

Our parade and church service on 11th November was always going to be a special event and it did turn into a *very special day*. Being the 100th anniversary of the Armistice which ended the First World War we had decided that we must fall in line with the rest of the country and hold our commemoration in the morning. We approached Wincanton Silver Band immediately after the 2017 event and asked if they could attend Wincanton in the morning and to our great delight they agreed, furthermore they confirmed they will in future be available in the morning on Remembrance Sunday for which we are very grateful. What was the highlight of our day was that 1 Regiment Army Air Corps, who hold the Freedom of Wincanton, asked if they could combine their Regimental commemoration in the town - but as the numbers of soldiers and families estimated to attend exceeded the capacity of the Parish Church it was decided that part of the Regiment would join us in church and the remainder would hold a Drumhead Ceremony at the Memorial Hall focusing on the War Memorial. Our parade was attended by large numbers of veterans and townspeople and was boosted by the whole of 1 Regiment marching to church with us and then the part holding their ceremony marched back to the Memorial Hall. As the Parish Church is in the process of selecting a new vicar we were indeed privileged to have the Revd. Ken Masters to arrange the order of service and conduct our service, especially as timings were crucial to hold the Two Minutes Silence and Last Post and format our new style service, we were thankful to Ken for such a wonderful service. Both our Member of Parliament, David Warburton MP and our Mayor Cllr. Howard Ellard both gave the readings in the service. We were also very pleased that David Hill resumed his role as Parade Marshal after his illnesses.



I believe the photos of the parade (right) gives justice to the fine turn out we had this year. After the services everyone was invited to the Memorial Hall to attend a reception given by 1 Regiment Army Air Corps where we all enjoyed some good army curry for lunch, many of us had forgotten how good it was or was it that army curry has got much better since then thanks to the chefs of 1 Regiment !



After the reception our brownies, guides and beaver scouts placed the traditional crosses around the War Memorial and overhead three Wildcat helicopters of 1 Regiment performed a fly past as a tribute to the War Dead of our town.

Don't forget in future our Remembrance Sunday Parade will always be in the morning.



Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club

I have had lots of positive feedback from members who have attended the Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club and this does seem a very good way forward for us too. Since the first meeting on 28th July the club has encouraged a growing number of people attending from all age groups and is very supportive of the RBL - a good time has been had by all at the breakfasts since.

The group meets every last Saturday of the month in the Dolphin Hotel Wincanton at 0945 hours and enjoys an excellent "all you can eat full breakfast" for £6.99.

Several of our members already attend so we hope to see you there !

Days out 2019

As I have said before it has been very hard to get enough members to join the days out and many trips ran as losses to the social fund. Although I have been discouraged I will continue the trips into 2019 from the social fund - which is not charity raised money and totally raised from social event profits, until it actually runs out. Our first trip in April will be city visit as opposed to the coast as it will not depend on the weather and will be on **27th April to Exeter**. As an experiment we are lowering the cost to £12 in the hope this is more attractive. It would be very helpful to me in planning the trip if you let me know in principal if you are interested - you do not need to make it firm at this stage but it would greatly help in assessing if there is enough interest.

Winter Quiz Night Friday 1st February

The winter Quiz this year will be in the stables of the Dolphin starting 7 p.m. on Friday 1st February. Teams ideally should be four persons but maximum is six. Entrance is £3 person at the door. Please let me know in advance to manage numbers. This will be the first time that we will have a quiz in conjunction with the Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club .

The quiz last winter was a great success so please come along, it will be a good group of people coming and is always fun.

Old Faithful 75th anniversary

As we go to print this Sandbag emails are coming in from relatives of the crew of "Old Faithful" the American Flying Fortress which crashed on 25th June 1944 at Snag Farm.

I mentioned in a previous Sandbag that a relative of Joseph Sullivan, the navigator on Old Faithful wishes to come to Wincanton to observe the 75th anniversary of the crash . I have had more emails from the USA saying that several relatives of the pilot, Peter Mikonis also want to be in Wincanton for the anniversary. In 2004 I was made a life member of the 91st Bombardment Group Memorial Association in the United States and they have pledged support in publicizing our event in the United States. They are very active and will be useful as they have many contacts in the U.K.

It is too early to advise you yet of our plans but I am aware of the anniversary and in the next Sandbag I hope to advise what we will be doing. The 25th June being a Tuesday, it is unlikely that the event will happen that day as in the 15 years since the big 60th anniversary commemoration it would be almost impossible to get a road closure for that day at the memorial. Traffic since then has increased dramatically and as we realised in 2004 the diversions needed were several miles and nowadays that would cause chaos and an impossible situation.

There are many options and we will work on things straightaway.

Help from the Legion

If you need help or advice from the Legion there has been changes in organisation within the RBL. The very quickest and efficient way to start now is first contact the Legion National Helpline on Freephone number **0808 8028080** by doing this they will be able to assist you.

County Conference 2019

Each year in January the County of Somerset hold its annual conference. This year it is on 13th January at Taunton. Steve and I will be attending and we will update everyone of any points of interest.

Armed Forces Day 2019 This year Armed Forces Day is 29th June