



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Harwell Branch

BRI805

**Monthly Branch Committee Meeting
Held on 15th May 2025
In the Committee Room at the Village Hall High Street Harwell
At 17.15 Hours.**

ATTENDANCE:

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

COMMITTEE: H. Benton, Chilton Poppy Appeal Organiser

1. WELCOME

T Pearson opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

2. EXHORTATION AND KOHIMA EPITAPH

Reginald White asked the meeting to bear in mind Geoff Street, Committee member, who passed away recently. He gave the Exhortation and silent tribute; he ended with the Kohima Epitaph.

3. APOLOGIES: J. Capone.

4. MINUTES OF THE APRIL 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes were circulated prior to the meeting. There were no corrections. The minutes were approved as a true record and signed by T Pearson.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE APRIL 2025 MINUTES

All covered in the following items.

6. FULL BRANCH MEETING

6.1 Meeting Arrangements

T Pearson reminded the Committee that we will have a full Branch meeting after the Harwell Feast on 26th May, to gain as much interest as possible first, possibly in June or July.

ACTION: To be arranged in due course.

7. HARWELL FEAST AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

7.1 Harwell Feast 26th May 2025.

T Pearson reported that she has booked a space for a stand. She supplied the Legion Public Liability Insurance certificate to the Feast committee as requested.

T Pearson has a wallpaper pasting table, and we can use table front, with the Standard and Union Flag as a backdrop. We also have leaflets and wristbands to hand out. She will enquire with someone who has a gazebo.

P Cox and S Haycox said that they were available to help.

H Benton asked if collecting buckets would be put out. T Pearson said that they could be but the main aim is to talk to people to raise interest in the Branch and Committee.

8. NEW ARTWORK AT THE RAF HARWELL MEMORIAL STONE

8.1 Artwork

T Pearson reported that work has now started on installing the artwork, so there is not anything more we can do to get any changes.

8.2 Landscaping

P Davies has sent a briefing to the Committee that the Campus are intending to landscape the entire area between the A4130, Perimeter Road and the Memorial Stone, including around the stone itself. This will include a new hedge, footpaths, lawns, and planting. He also circulated a draft of the new layout; a copy was shown at the meeting by P Cox.

This was classed as confidential, but most present were already aware. It was observed that you cannot have both controversial and confidential.

9. D DAY 2025

9.1 Parade Marshal

P Cox has written a letter of apology to P Davies, which he had accepted.

P Davies has agreed to continue making the arrangements and responding to emails as he had in previous years up to the day, but he was no longer willing to be parade marshal on the day. He is going to ask Angela Logue, County Parade Marshal, to be Parade Marshal.

9.2 Guest of Honour

T Pearson reported that P Davies had written to invite Lynda Atkins, National Chair to be Guest of Honour. However, she is attending the Commemorations in Normandy and is unlikely to be back in time to attend the Harwell Commemoration. She suggested that we could contact her early next year regarding the 2026 commemoration.

As it is not a special anniversary year, e.g. 80 or 85th, and it is now short notice, T Pearson and P Cox suggested that we do not have a Guest of Honour this year. **Agreed.**

9.3 Welcome Address

P Davies gave the welcome address in previous years, with thanks to contributors and introduction of the Guest of Honour. However he will not be present.

T Pearson said that as she is very new in post as Chair, and a new member of the Legion, she would prefer that someone else gave the welcome.

It was suggested that David Drew, County President or Jim Sibbald, National Trustee, could do this. T Pearson is already in touch with D Drew, County President and could ask him.

Agreed.

ACTION: T Pearson to contact D Drew.

9.4 Contributors and Documentation

P Cox said that P Davies usually liaises with the Campus regarding parking, traffic marshalling and service sheets. He also liaises with the bugler, first aid team, church / padre, and aircraft provider. He writes and circulates the risk assessment and joining instructions, and posts details on facebook etc. The current situation is:

- The bugler has agreed to play.
- The Campus has agreed to provide a car park and service sheets etc.
- Rich Pillans has arranged for a glider to be on ground display, to arrive by road.

It was suggested that P Cox contacts P Davies to check progress.

ACTION: P Cox to check with P Davies

9.5 Invitation List

P Cox reported that he and P Davies have sent approximately 43 invitations to the usual organisations and 3 general invitations to e.g. Berkshire and Oxfordshire Standard Bearers.

11 reminders have been sent. 33 organisations have accepted and one is not attending but making a donation directly to RBL instead. 12 have not confirmed or not replied yet. From experience, another 6 or 7 are likely to attend.

There is currently one more invitation to do, to Moderna. P Cox needs to find a contact. It was stated that Moderna must be invited.

ACTION: P Cox to find contact and send invitation to Moderna.

9.6 Wreaths

P Cox reported that 11 wreaths have been requested so far. He has some wreaths in stock and the crosses and large Poppies for Chilton School. He has ordered 13 wreaths and can order more. He has ordered a RBL wreath for the Branch.

9.7 Publicity

P Cox said that the deadline for the Harwell News has passed (15th March for the April-May edition). We could post details on facebook. It was stated that the deadline for the Chilton Chronicle is about 20th May.

T Pearsons said that she may be able to source a poster

9.8 Timetable

P Cox has drafted a timetable and sent it to P Davies for review. He will circulate it once reviewed.

ACTION: P Cox to circulate timetable.

10. VE DAY AND VJ DAY

10.1 Branch VE Day Commemoration Thursday 8th May 2025

P Cox reported that the Commemoration was held at 2pm on the 8th May, at the High Street War Memorial. This was selected as it was a little after the televised Westminster Abbey service finished. P Cox sent details to Branch members on email.

T Pearson, R White, H Benton, P Cox, and S Haycox attended with small number of villagers. R. White gave the Exhortation, led a short Silence, and concluded with the Kohima Epitaph. P Cox laid a VE80 wreath.

Traffic stopped and T Pearson and Steve Hale from Chilton explained what was going on to a few drivers. P Cox offered to write and thank Mr Hale for this. **Agreed.**

S Haycox took some photographs at the Commemoration, which P Cox offered to circulate to members. **Agreed.**

ACTION: P Cox to write to S Hale and circulate link to photographs to members.

10.2 Harwellian VE 80 Event

T Pearson reported that the Harwellian held an event on Monday 5th May.

10.3 Chilton Street Parties

H Benton reported that there was a street party on The Orchids, on 5th May. She had sent invitations and 20 people came from the 23 houses in the road. People brought their own food and drink. It went very well though the weather was cold.

A street party was also held on Crafts End, about 30 people attended out of 140 houses.

10.4 Chilton and Upton Pubs Collections

H Benton reported that the Crown pub in Chilton held an event later in the day on the 5th May with a singer. The pub was very full.

The new owner of the Crown, and the George and Dragon in Upton, contacted Poppy Appeal HQ to arrange for collecting boxes for the event. This enquiry was passed to H Benton who provided a collecting bucket and two collecting boxes for each pub. These will be collected and counted shortly.

The owner is keen to support the Poppy Appeal. He offered to make a further donation to the VE collection and he has asked for collecting boxes to go in both pubs all year round.

10.5 VE 80 Badges

H Benton said that she had provided 22 badges and raised £139 so far, more donations are coming in.

10.6 VJ 80 Friday 15th August 2025

The meeting discussed what the Branch should do:

H Benton said that her father had fought in the Far East campaign. There would not be as much publicity nationally, or large Commemorations as there was for VE80. The Far East Campaign was known as the forgotten war. When her father got back to the UK in December 1945 people were abusive as he was still in uniform. Only the veterans and their families remembered VJ day.

P Cox said that the late President Reg East served in the Far East, and other members had relatives who also served in the campaign.

T Pearson suggested that wreaths should be laid at both the High Street War Memorial and at the Commonwealth War Graves in the Cemetery.

No Objections.

Sarah Brown Poppy Appeal Manager for West Berks and the Vale area only has 100 VJ badges so it is unlikely we will have any from her. They are available from the Poppy Shop.

It was suggested that we have a similar Commemoration at the High Street memorial as we did for VE 80. **Agreed.**

ACTION: P Cox to order a VJ 80 wreath.

11. SECRETARY'S REPORT

P Cox reported:

11.1 Social Media response: (received in April)

The Membership Comms Team responded to our query that there are some very basic tips for general social media posting available on MAP but unfortunately, we do not have any post templates that can be used. They also suggested that if they have an “rbl.community” account they could ask on Viva Engage what posts or resources other Branches or Officers have used and/or any tips they have.

11.2 Documents from Previous Secretary

P Cox has not yet shredded the membership lists and other documents.

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

11.3 April Minutes and May Agenda

Minutes and Agenda written and circulated.

11.4 Agenda and Meeting Type.

T Pearson suggested we might put agendas on the website 10 days in advance of meetings to allow members to view or attend. P Cox looked up the rules for meeting in the Management Handbook. They are:

Committee Meetings are for committee members and invited guests.

General Branch Meetings are open to all members.

These meetings have been Committee meetings so far. We could call Branch meetings each month – open to all members, and advertise them on the website, and have Committee meetings as needed.

Discussion ensued:

- It could give people the opportunity to get involved.
- If we do not tell people they will not know – either about our meetings or what the Legion does. Many are not aware.
- We should have an open-door policy.
- There is a 15minute open session at the start of each Parish Council meeting.
- There is nothing confidential discussed at these meetings so they could be open.
- People may offer to help or have good ideas, either as a member, or committee member in time.

- The ex-military generation is going, so we must be more 21st century. We need the next generation coming through from now on.
- We should email everyone about the meetings but ask them to let us know if attending due to the small size of the room currently used. **All Agreed**

ACTION: P Cox to email invitations to members and add to website.

11.5 Visit of County Chair

The County Chair will attend the June meeting.

11.6 Website

P Cox reminded the Committee that the next two-yearly payment for registering the domain name “harwellrbl.co.uk” is due in May.

David Marsh created and hosts the website, makes updates, and provides technical support (including the domain name) for the last 15 years or so. He has informed the Branch several times over the past few years, that he will stop at some point, and we should consider alternatives for hosting the web pages, such as Krystal, sooner rather than later.

P Cox has had a brief look at Krystal - the standard “Amethyst” option is free for charities (usually £7 per month or £70 annually) or they offer 50% off their more expensive options.

H Benton asked if the RBL provide an option. P Cox said they do, based on the Legion’s National website. T Pearson said that she has web design experience and could investigate.

It was suggested that P Cox asks D Marsh for statistics for the web page.

ACTION: P Cox to ask D Marsh for statistics.

11.7 Printing.

Printed and distributed the agenda for this meeting, April 2024 Minutes, and the annual report (see next item). A comparatively low amount of printing this month again.

11.8 Annual Report for Harwell Parish Council Annual meeting 13/5/35

Requested received on 29th April, with deadline 7th May. This was the same week as VE Day. P. Cox wrote a report including the D Day 80 Festival and an appeal for Branch members and Committee members. He submitted it on 10th May. It does not seem to be on the Parish Council website.

11.9 Welfare

No enquiries received since the last meeting.

11.10 Membership

Branch Membership has dropped by 1 to 43 members.

Sadly, Geoff Street’s membership was due to finish in January, and with the 3 months grace it stopped in April, shortly before he passed away.

The welcome letter is in hand. There is a template on the MAP which we could adapt.

ACTION: P Cox to draft letter.

11.11 Branch Standard

The Standard has not been paraded since the last meeting. We may want to arrange for the Standard to be paraded at Geoff Street’s funeral – by P Davies or through County. S Haycox

said that the date for the funeral would be agreed next week. We will contact P Davies after that, and County if necessary.

11.12 Correspondence

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

Correspondence from Legion County Office and National Headquarters:

Membership Newsletter April 2025

Central News May 2025

Officers and Membership versions again.

Confirmation of Elected Candidates for National Chair and Vice Chair

The Candidates we voted for were elected.

Poppy Appeal 2024 raised £51.4m

Branch Subscription Fees Conformation Request

See Treasurer's report.

Changes to the Albert Hall Festival of Remembrance Ticketing.

Instead of tickets being bought on a first-come-first-served basis, this year members will have three weeks to enter a ballot for a chance to secure tickets through an online platform. This is to ensure that more members have a chance to secure tickets.

The Ballot opens on 4 June and closes on 24 June. One entry per person. 2 tickets per person for afternoon or evening performance. After the ballot closes, tickets will be allocated randomly by the online system.

Membership Council Representatives Vacancies.

Several of the areas had no candidates in the recent election, and the vacancies will now be filled by co-option, including our area (South East). Deadline is 28th May.

VE 80 "Post Box Toppers" Pictures

Made by two "Knit and Natter" groups, photos circulated by the Surbiton and Arley Branch Secretaries.

Request for Help at Binfield VE Day event 11th May.

Request for Standards for Botley Care Home event 4th May

To attend the 80th anniversary Commemoration of Holger Dansk 2025. This commemorates the exact moment when Sir Winston Churchill gave thanks to all those in the Danish Resistance Movement who through their courage helped bring about the liberation of their country and the end of the war.

Request for Pictures of VE 80 Celebrations

From HQ via County. To pass to the HQ communications team for their use.

S Haycox said that he will need permission from all who were in the photographs, so he will not be submitting his photographs.

Correspondence from Other Organisations

May 2025 Chilton Chronicle

Includes the VE 80 events in Chilton, the Moderna building, security fence and Artwork.

12. TREASURER'S REPORT

S Haycox reported:

12.1 Branch Funds

Funds held according to the latest statements are:

HARWELL BRANCH

Branch Funds Initiative (BFI). Account	£ 368
Current Account:	<u>£ 316</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£ 682</u>

12.2 Legacy Transfer for Flypast

S Haycox said that we have not heard if County had approved the transfer.

12.3 Meeting Room Payments

P Cox booked and paid for the meeting room for this meeting and the June meeting: £12.60 for 2 hours, (which is the minimum time) for each meeting, total £25.20. The receipt is awaited.

He is still intending to create a new Village Hall account to book the room.

S Haycox said that the room fees are bigger than our annual income, which is the membership fee of £2 from 43 members, total £86. So, our “float” fund in the current account is going down. We still have enough for the VE80 and VJ80 wreaths.

12.4 Donation to Branch from Parish Council

S Haycox reported that Harwell Parish Council are donating £100 to the Branch as part of their policy to support local organisations.

12.5 Annual Audit

The annual audit on the Branch accounts is usually done by a Legion Qualified Examiner. This year all Berkshire Branch audits will be done by Legion Headquarters financial staff.

12.6 Branch Subscription Fees Conformation Request

This is the annual request to let Legion HQ know if we have changed the fees. Changes can be made at an AGM. The National fee is going up.

The Harwell Branch fees are £2 membership and £2 joining fee (first year only). They have been the same for 17 years. (There used to be a lot more postal costs as the Branch used to collect the subscription fees, distribute the membership cards and send reminders.

It was suggested that we leave the fees as is.

13. POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER'S REPORT

13.1 VE 80 Day Parties and Badges

See report by H Benton in items 10.4 and 10.5.

13.2 VE80 Wreath

The Treasurer provided a cheque to the Poppy Appeal for £27.49 after the meeting.

13.3 D Day 2024 report

P Cox has not yet checked with the organisation that paid by invoice last year as they are not attending this year.

13.4 D Day 2025

We are getting a card machine, to arrive next week. H Benton will use this to collect from the congregation, and for any wreath payments. The Toucan payment app is also available.

13.5 November 2024 Collection

The unused stock will be sent back to the Poppy Appeal warehouse at Aylesford soon.

13.6 November 2025 Collection Schools Packs and Card Terminals

S Brown, County Poppy Appeal Manager contacted H Benton to say that we will get 2 school packs this year, rather than the 3 we have had previously. Also, we are only getting one card terminal rather than two. S Brown may allocate her own managers terminal.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1 Awards

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

14.2 D Day Information and Request for help to Chilton Chronicle

H Benton offered to send details of the D Day Service and the request for members and Committee members to the Chronicle for the next edition.

14.3 Letter about Membership and Committee Members

It was suggested that the letter is shortened to fit on one page as people are unlikely to read anything longer.

Action: P Cox to reword letter.

15. CONFIRM DATE AND VENUE OF JUNE MEETING

T Pearson said that the next meeting will be on Thursday 19th June, at 17:15 in the Village Hall Committee Room.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 18:29 hours.

Minutes approved at the Branch meeting held on _____

Chair _____