



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Harwell Branch

BRI805

**Monthly Branch Committee Meeting
Held on 13th February 2025
In the Committee Room at the Village Hall High Street Harwell
At 17.30 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:

MEMBERS: J. Capone (JC) – appointed to the Committee at this meeting

1. WELCOME

2. EXHORTATION AND KOHIMA EPITAPH

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

3. APOLOGIES: H. Benton, J. G. Street.

4. MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING

There were no corrections. The minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE JANUARY 2025 MINUTES

5.1 FULL BRANCH MEETING

T Pearson has talked to the Harwellian about hosting a Branch meeting, and their decision is awaited, hopefully in the next couple of weeks.

At that point, there will be very little time to give notice of a meeting. She proposed that the full Branch meeting is held over until April. **Agreed.**

Action: T Pearson to contact the Harwellian.

5.2 Didcot Army Cadet Force Open Evening 22nd January

T Pearson and J Capone had both attended this event held at the Didcot Army Cadet Centre straight after the January Committee meeting. J Capone is also an instructor at Didcot Army Cadet Force and had attended this event in this capacity. T Pearson had attended at J Capone's invitation.

T Pearson had a stand at the open day, with some handouts she had created with the link to join Harwell RBL and also took some "About the Legion" and "How We help" leaflets. The Branch Standard was displayed at the front of the hall.

J Capone reported that the event was attended by the Mayor of Didcot, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire amongst others.

T Pearson had a long conversation with the Deputy Commander of the Oxfordshire ACF about the ways the RBL could be brought into the ACF in the County.

T Pearson and J Capones said that Didcot ACF and Harwell RBL will work on having a closer relationship and getting more involved in Remembrance and all other areas. J Capone said that Didcot ACF has raised £1600 for the Poppy Appeal at Didcot town Centre and on the parade.

T Pearson emphasised that if there is no input the Branch will die or merge with another group. The Remembrance parade will continue.

5.3 County Recruitment Officer and Promotional Leaflets and Materials.

P Cox said that the County Membership Support Officer (CMSO) Phil Davies had said that unfortunately there is no County Recruiting officer at present.

The CSMO said that there is not a big range of promotional materials available. He ordered some promotional bags, wristbands, key rings and "How We Help" and "Becoming A Member" leaflets in limited quantities, some has arrived, more on the way.

J Capone offered to distribute leaflets amongst the ACF parents etc. We could also consider mail shots and social media posts. Organisations usually have a format of messages to use specified by their HQ. There is also a Company meeting in the beginning of March.

Action: P Cox to find RBL HQ social media contact.

6. APPOINT JASON CAPONE-TAYLOR AS CEREMONIAL OFFICER AND CO-OPT TO BRANCH COMMITTEE

PROPOSAL: That Jason Capone is co-opted to the Committee.

Proposed: Chair

Seconded: President

Agreed Unanimously

J Capone said that he may be able to get time off work to attend the required courses. T Pearson said that they are usually at weekends.

Ceremonial Officer and Parade Marshal Requirements

T Pearson said that member Peter Davies, former Ceremonial Officer, had been in touch about the requirements for Ceremonial Officer and Parade Marshal: It is not straightforward

to appoint to these roles. Also, it is not clear who pays for the courses, travel and accommodation.

T Pearson proposed that we pause appointing J Capone as Ceremonial Officer and Parade Marshal until we can find out more. **Agreed.**

Action: T Pearson to look into Ceremonial Officer and Parade Marshal requirements and payments for courses and travel with P Davies and County MSO.

7. FUTURE OF THE BRANCH

7.1 General Comments

J Capone said that we should push recruitment.

J Capone and T Pearson said that not many people know what the Legion does. Most think it is just the Poppy Appeal. We need to raise awareness in the local community.

T Pearson said that some of the Army cadets come from Harwell so their parents may want to join Harwell Branch rather than Didcot.

J Capone said that the Legion is not just for veterans of the World Wars, but to support the military all the way through to today, there is a constant flow of serving and ex service personnel.

7.2 Community Awareness Events

Suggestions included:

Mailing the Membership

P Cox suggested that, instead of waiting for the March meeting, we could send an appeal for Committee members and asking any interested to contact us and attend a monthly meeting.

Facebook

T Pearson said that we could promote Branch membership on facebook

Open Evening and Ask the Committee Sessions:

J Capone suggested that the Committee has an open evening. Alternatively, some Committee members could meet at a local venue and email the Branch membership asking if there is anything they would like to change, or just come along and have a chat with us. A local group of veterans gather once a month at a venue in Didcot. About 15-16 attend.

Harwell Feast

T Pearson suggested that the Branch has a stand at this year's event, held on May bank holiday Monday. J Capone said that the ACF had run stands at similar events.

Mailshot

T Pearson suggested a mailshot to the villages.

Article.

J Capone suggested that we compile an article to send to newsletters, use in posters and other media, to show what the Branch has contributed through the years and what would be lost if it closes. This could include:

- What the Branch has done over the last 5 years.
 - Donations to Welfare cases (anonymised)
 - Branch history over the longer term.
 - People who have been significantly involved over the year.
- If people feel a connection to the Branch, they are more likely to volunteer.
Action P Cox to draft an article.

8. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY AND ARMISTICE 2024

P Cox has composed a letter of thanks to first aider (which had been missed in December), and a draft of final timetable of tasks and deadlines, T Pearson has submitted some corrections from the Parish Council. He will send these shortly.

Action: P Cox to send letter to First Aider and circulate final version of timetable

T Pearson reported that the wreaths should already have been wired to memorial by the Parish Council groundsmen. There was some discussion of other ways that the wreaths could be attached.

9. D DAY 2025

T Pearson proposed that Peter Davies runs the D Day service as an Air Cadet Corps Warrant Officer (WO).

PROPOSAL: That WO Peter Davies runs the D Day service on Saturday 8th June 2025 on behalf of the Branch and Campus.

Proposed: Chair Seconded: J Capone Agreed Unanimously

10. VE AND VJ DAY

10.1 VE Day Thursday 8th May 2025

T Pearson proposed that the Branch should run a Commemorative event.

Discussion ensued:

- This could be a small Commemoration – just the Committee laying a wreath at the War Memorial.
- There was a small Commemoration for RBL100 – just the former President and Chair and current Secretary laying a wreath at the Memorial.
- There could be a commemoration at the High Street War Memorial or at the War Graves in the cemetery.
- A commemoration at the High Street Memorial would need a road closure order (must be applied for by the Parish Council).
- VE 80 would be a very large national Commemoration.
- There could be a commemoration with a bring-your-own picnic at the High Street or in the recreation ground.
- The Harwellian Club or other establishments may be involved.
- We could have a bugler to play the last post.

Action: Discuss at March meeting.

10.2 VJ Day Friday 15th August 2025

J Capone suggested that we do not have a formal parade, but advertise that we will gather at one of the Memorials at a particular time and people would be welcome to join us.

Action: Discuss at March meeting.

11. SECRETARY'S REPORT

11.1 Agenda

Each item on the agenda item now has initials to show who is leading it as suggested by T Pearson. The format of the minutes could also be revised in a similar way.

11.2 Archive Boxes at Harwellian Club

P Cox has not yet contacted Oxfordshire Local History Centre to transfer old documents and minute books from the Storage Boxes in the Club.

There are some photos in the boxes which should go to the people involved, also a WW1 Memorial Plaque or "Death Penny" which could go to the family, or else they are worth a small amount. He has a list of items.

There are some large pictures of aircraft in the loft, which used to hang on the walls of the Harwellian. These could go to Ridgeway Military History group. Alternatively, they could be auctioned for the Legion.

T Pearson said that she has contacted Kath Luker who can advise and help.

Action: T Pearson to arrange suitable handover. P Cox to provide list.

11.3 Other Records

Sandra Pateman (the Secretary before P Cox) has passed some old Legion documents to P Cox. They are mainly old membership listings – due to data protection these must be shredded.

Action: P Cox to shred membership listings, and inform the Committee if there are any other documents present.

11.4 Website Updates

P Cox has updated the website:

- Pictures and details of the new President, and the Geoff Street and Hazel Benton receiving Branch awards as requested by T Pearson - a copy of her FB post.
- Meetings page updated to show that the Committee is meeting and there will be a Branch meeting soon.
- The December 2024 draft minutes.

11.5 Web Page Management – Domain Name and Hosting

David Marsh hosts the website and has registered the domain name on behalf of the Branch. There is a £20 registration fee for the domain name "harwellrbl.co.uk" due every two years. D Marsh paid the latest fee in May 2023 as a donation.

D Marsh is currently hosting the website free of charge. He may want to stop in the near future so the Branch should consider taking it on. A company called "Krystal" provides free hosting for charities – P Cox can enquire. D Marsh can attend a meeting to explain.

There was a brief discussion and it was agreed to hold this in hand for now.

11.6 Printing Costs

Printing since the last meeting included: the February 2025 Agenda, and the January 2024 Minutes. No County newsletter again this month so a relatively low volume of printing.

11.7 Meeting Room

The Secretary has booked and paid for the Committee room as follows:

- December 2024: 2 hours - (minimum booking and limited agenda) £12.20
- January 2025: 2 ¼ hours booked for first full agenda meeting: £14.18
- February 2025: 2 hours £12.60.

The meeting discussed moving Committee meetings to the Harwellian. They had offered a reserved table during opening hours at no charge. However, the Club only opens at 6pm, and confidential matters may need to be discussed.

It was proposed that the Committee continues to meet at the Village Hall Committee Room for another couple of months. **Agreed.**

11.8 Welfare

T Pearson received an enquiry recently. P Cox provided contact details for the RBL support – central phone number, live chat etc. and that they could try a Regimental / Sqn association.

While looking into this, he found that the “Veterans Gateway” website and call centre has closed. It was launched a couple of years ago, to refer people to the most suitable Veterans Charity.

J Capone added that Help for Heroes is also not as active as it was, whereas the RBL has stayed active for 100 years.

Another possible need was mentioned later in the meeting.

Action: P Cox to find and supply contacts for the RBL, SSAFA and other relevant associations.

12. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY’S REPORT

Branch Membership has increased by 1 to 44.

12.1 New Member

All present welcomed Jason Capone to Branch membership. J Capone said that it was an honour to join and thanked the Committee for welcoming him.

12.2 Members who have left

P Cox has found the archived membership and leavers reports on the MAP, so he can see who left and when. The four members who left by the January meeting were due to renew in October 2024. You get 3 months grace to pay after the renewal date to pay renewal fee. Then membership is cancelled and you have to rejoin including any joining fee.

Discussion ensued:

Is there any reason why the members left?

P Cox said that they paid by cash or cheque etc – so have to do something to stay a member, rather than direct debit payers who need to do something to leave.

Why do members pay just to receive a magazine?

- The Branch just receives £2, the rest goes to HQ.
- Membership can provide togetherness for the ex-service community and facilities. If the Branch closes this won't be there.

12.3 Welcome Letter to New Members.

In hand.

Action: P Cox to write letter

13. TREASURER'S REPORT

13.1 Branch Funds

Funds held according to the latest statements are:

HARWELL BRANCH

Branch Funds Initiative (BFI). Account	£ 581.17
Current Account:	<u>£ 357.73</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£ 938.90*</u>

* The transfer of £201 to the Gardening Club has not yet taken place so the total of funds available is **£737.90**.

13.2 Access to Legacy

S Haycox explained that any large legacy has to be paid to Headquarters, which hold the money in a fund similar to the BFI. An application needs to be made to transfer the funds to the BFI or current account so they can be used.

S Haycox has enquired with County but no one knows how to do this.

Action: P Cox to contact HQ finance team.

13.3 Signatories for Bank Account

In hand.

Action: S Haycox to add T Pearson as a signatory.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence received since the January meeting includes:

14.1 Correspondence from Legion County Office and National Headquarters:

- **Membership Newsletter January 2025**
- **Central News February 2025**
- **Presentation by Lieutenant General James Bashall, CB, CBE – “The Royal British Legion Yesterday and Today” - At Kingsclere RBL Friday 4th April at 7:30pm. Tickets £5. Proceeds to the RBL.**

14.2 Correspondence from Other Organisations

- **January 2025 Chilton Chronicle - Charity Market raised money for “Standing With Giants” WW2 commemoration organisation.**
- **February 2025 Chilton Chronicle**

- **February 2025 Harwell News** - Includes an article on the Poppy Appeal.

15. CEREMONIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

J Capone said that he was looking forward to this year's Remembrance Parade. There were a few issues to learn from last year. He was looking to improve from the previous year.

16. STANDARD BEARER'S REPORT

The Standard has not been paraded since the last meeting.

Remembrance

J Capone proposed that Standard Bearers for the Branch Standard and Union Flag at Remembrance could be one from the ACF and one from the ATC.

Funerals

J Capone said that he may be able to get time off work to parade the Standard. P Cox said that we can ask County HQ to put out a request for Standard Bearers if needed.

Course

There may be a Standard Bearer course.

Action: T Pearson to ask P Davies.

17. POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER'S REPORT

17.1 Remembrance Wreaths

Including the **£55** paid by the Branch for the remembrance wreaths at the end of the last meeting, **Total paid / donated for 15 wreaths is now £433.**

The total that was expected for the 15 wreaths is **£370.50** so **the of total extra donations is still £62.50.**

17.2 Volunteer Badges

H Benton and P Cox have received trial volunteer badges. They were also on offer to our Poppy Appeal volunteers.

17.3 D Day 2024 Wreaths

Including the payment for the Branch wreath made last month:

Total Confirmed to date: **£452.46** for **16** wreaths supplied,
Expected payment is £386.85 so extra donations total is £65.61.

Payment for one wreath (by invoice) has not yet been confirmed.

17.4 D Day 2025 Card Machine

The West Berks and Vale Poppy Appeal Manager has asked for dates of events that could use a card machine. As we collected a substantial sum by card payment last year, we will ask for one for this year's Commemoration.

17.5 November 2025 Collection

J Capone said that the ACF cadets may be able to help with the house-to-house collection. P Cox said that this must be the older cadets (over 16) to comply with RBL rules.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18.1 Further Awards

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

19. DECIDE DATE AND VENUE OF MARCH MEETING

19.1 March Committee Meeting

The Chair suggested that we meet on 13th March 2025 at 5:30pm in the Village Hall Committee Room.

Agreed.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 18:56 hours.

Minutes approved at the Branch meeting held on _____

Chair _____