



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Harwell Branch

BRI805

**Monthly Branch Committee Meeting
Held on 19th June 2025
In the Committee Room at the Village Hall High Street Harwell
At 17.15 Hours.**

ATTENDANCE:

R. Edgington - Berkshire and the Vale County Chair
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
P. Sedwards – accepted to the Committee in the meeting.

1. WELCOME

T Pearson opened the meeting and welcomed Rosemary Edgington, Berkshire and the Vale County Chair, to the meeting.

2. EXHORTATION AND KOHIMA EPITAPH

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

3. APOLOGIES: J. Capone.

4. MINUTES OF THE MAY 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 MAY 2025 MINUTES

None.

6. NEWS AND ADDRESS BY COUNTY CHAIR

The County Chair gave the following address and answered questions:

National Conference and New Strategy

R Edgington, County Chair distributed paper copies of the new National Strategy. (This was also distributed by email to the membership in June).

She said that the new strategy involves getting back to being more focussed on the membership.

The late National President Sir Clive Johnstone had started this change. The new National President, Paul Bennett and Director General, Mark Atkinson, are continuing to take this forward. Without the membership the Legion will die. They will also see if they can do something to stop the RBL Clubs closing. Everyone came away from the Conference in a positive mood.

The Legion will be building on the strategy. Delegates said that we need national advertising all year round, not just during the Poppy Appeal in late October and early November. We need to tell the public what we do, as many do not know.

There were some speakers who had benefitted from the Legion's help. One group had left the Forces and had developed depression. They joined a Legion comedy project to give recovery through comedy. It made them stop and think. At the end of the week, they put on a show.

Help for Heroes does not seem to be doing much now?

R Edgington said that they focussed on big individual projects. The Legion does these too and runs the facilities once built. The Battle Back centre is run by the Legion. The Legion also provides personal rehabilitation. Help for Heroes focuses on providing the buildings, such as the Tidworth centre which is run by the Legion.

RBL Community Email Addresses.

R Edgington said that these should be used for Legion business.

T Pearson said that she and P Cox use the Chair and Secretary addresses. She will arrange for appropriate addresses for J Capone and P Sedwards.

ACTION: T Pearson to speak to Phil Davies County Membership Engagement Officer (MEO).

S Haycox asked about reinstating the Treasurer address.

ACTION: S Haycox / T Pearson / R Edgington as appropriate.

P Cox asked if there will be RBL Community addresses for Poppy Appeal Organisers.

R Edgington said no, possibly because the RBL community addresses lapse after 90 days and many PAOs will not use them from the end of the appeal in November until the next appeal next year.

Training Courses

R Edgington said that there is a wide range of courses available on the MAP and through Discover.

T Pearson said that she has the Branch Management course to do. She has completed two online courses.

R Edgington said that this course is yet to be scheduled. She is currently running the Branch Secretary courses. Treasurer courses are also available. Some courses are online, others are hybrid (on line and in person).

R Edgington thanked the Committee for the invitation to attend the meeting.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

T Pearson said that we have been having Committee meetings up to now. She proposed that the next meeting is a Branch meeting for the membership to attend. This is to ask them what activities they would like to do. We should email all the members that we have email addresses for. We need to start somewhere. We need to get more people to join, get our current membership more involved, and increase engagement. If there is no take-up then we return to having Committee meetings.

We only have emails for some of the Branch members, but a member attended the VE 80 Commemoration just from an email. We will have to investigate how to communicate with the other members.

ACTION: P Cox to email membership.

Discussion ensued:

We could also advertise the meeting on Harwell News or other Harwell and Chilton groups.

What format will the meeting take?

T Pearson said it is to ask the members what they would like to do and get feedback. We could then consider which suggestions to take forward at the following meetings

What does the Branch do apart from D Day, Armistice, and Remembrance?

This is key. The Harwellian Club used to run social activities for the Legion when it was a Legion Club.

What is the demographic of the membership?

Mainly older.

T Pearson said that we have members from the World War 2 generation but we are not getting the younger members. We could publicise the Branch with posts on facebook, or possibly ask the school or Little Pippins if they can email their parents about the Branch. We need ideas about how to engage the younger generation.

When will the new strategy start?

R Edgington said that there is another deadline at the beginning of September. There will be a lot of advertising before Poppy fortnight. We need to say that the Poppy Appeal is not just a stand-alone charity, but run by the RBL.

The Legion sends materials for the Poppy Appeal to all schools across Britain to engage with. It has been very good for the last two years as Armistice Day has been in the week and there was an online service at 11am for school children.

T Pearson said that we get some engagement from the primary school children at the village Armistice Ceremony, but the Senior school age children and older is the issue.

P Sedwards said that his son is taking GCSE History and World War 1 and 2 are big topics. There is the opportunity for engagement by visiting the battlefields.

R Edgington said that the RBL is considering a youth strategy. The Legion does not have a safeguarding policy for youth. Any young people (17 or under) taking part in Legion activities are the responsibility of an adult present with them, such as their parent or guardian, or their ATC or ACF group leader is responsible.

8. NEW OFFICERS

T Pearson proposed P Sedwards as Committee Member with responsibility for D Day commemorations.

Agreed by All present.

T Pearson also said that J Capone would continue as Ceremonial Officer and she will arrange for appropriate RBL Community email addresses to be allocated.

9. D DAY 2025 REPORT AND LETTERS OF THANKS

T Pearson said that the Ceremony went very well. The rain arrived just afterwards. The letters of thanks will now be completed.

P Cox reported:

9.1 Parade Marshal

P Davies copied P Cox in to emails about First Aid, Church and Traffic marshalling which he was arranging, so he only asked P Davies about the static aircraft.

P Davies continued to liaise with the contributors and wreath layers and make arrangements up to, and on the day, including:

- The Risk Assessment.
- Joining instructions for all attendees, and for the Cadet and reenactment groups.
- The list of wreath layers.
- Notes for the wreath layers brief by the Parade Marshal, and for the Master of Ceremonies address.
- Checking the timetable which P Cox then distributed.
- Liaising with Parade Marshal Angela Logue over changes to arrangements for the poor forecast.

9.2 Welcome Address

T Pearson asked D Drew to give this address. He gave an excellent welcome, thanking the Campus Management, T Pearson, P Davies, and P Cox amongst others.

9.3 Guest of Honour

T Pearson and D Drew arranged that Jim Sibbald, National Trustee, should be Guest of Honour (as suggested by P Davies). He gave an excellent address, explaining the significance of the Ceremony and the new Artwork and artist who was also present.

9.4 Contributors and Documentation

- The Campus management provided 100 service sheets, a Public Address system, and a gazebo.

- Campus Security opened and closed the old contractor car park on Frome Road, and marshalled the traffic.
- Chilton PC collected and set up the PA System and Gazebo (their suggestion to protect the PA and speakers.
- Service Sheets were distributed by the Army and Air Cadets and H Benton.
- First aid cover was provided by St. John Ambulance volunteers and Cadet officers. There were at least 4 people in need of help during the service.
- The Padre was Rev Jeremy Parsons and the Bugler was R Selvidge,

9.5 Parade Changes

Due to the poor forecast and likely damage to the Standards, A Logue opted not to have a parade but to form the Standard Bearers up standing behind the Stone without their Standards. The Air Training Corps and Army Cadet Force marched independently from the car park to the stone and formed up each side of it. The Red Line Home Guard formed up either side of the path and the Scouts gathered on the path.

Also, due to the poor forecast, the owner of the glider which was going to be displayed on the ground did not attend.

9.6 Timing of Ceremony

D Drew started the parade early at approx. 17:05 due to the poor forecast. The addresses were timetabled to start at 17:15 with the service starting at 17:30.

H Benton said that some people arrived in time for the service at the 17:30, the advertised time and were not happy that it started early.

P Cox suggested that we advise people to be in place from 17:00 onwards as the start may be moved from 17:30 depending on the weather.

9.7 Participants

P Cox sent an invite to Moderna, who attended and laid a wreath. There were two more first-time wreath layers: Harwell Security and Night Fright.

There were 40 wreath layers in all, and the school children laid Poppies and Crosses.

P Cox supplied 14 wreaths, the Poppies and Crosses, and two badge stickers. See item 14.1.

9.8 Publicity

H Benton composed an article for the Chilton Chronicle tying in the Gliders departing from RAF Harwell and what the Memorial Stone is commemorating. A lot of people go, but have no idea that the Branch organises the Commemoration. Most people that attended were regulars, the poor weather forecast probably did not help.

P Cox sent details to the Harwell News which was issued after the parade and the details did not appear.

P Cox updated P Davies' poster from 2023 with this year's information. He put this in Harwell News, Bobs Butchers and the Old AERE Facebook page.

H Benton put posters up in the Rose and Crown pub, Chilton Church, and the village notice board by the green.

T Pearson posted it on the Harwell RBL facebook page.

9.9 Letters of Thanks:

These should go to:

Contributors: Parade Marshal, Marster of Ceremonies, Guest of Honour, First aiders, Campus Management and Campus security, the Bugler, Church, and Chilton Parish Council.

Attendees and wreath layers: about 40 including Civic representatives, Campus Organisations, Veterans Groups, RBL Branches, youth groups and the school, and other clubs and associations.

P Cox has sent a link to the Treasurer's pictures to Branch Members. The Treasurer put a link on the Old AERE facebook page.

9.10 Report

P Cox has adapted the 2024 report and will send to Chilton Chronicle, Harwell News and post it on facebook and website.

9.11 Timetable

P Cox has sent version 1 and will create and send version 2 in due course.

10. BRANCH WEBSITE

T Pearson said that she does not think that the website complies with the latest accessibility rules, in addition to the other considerations mentioned in the last few meetings. So, we should now move the website to Krystal web hosting and do this in-house. There is not a huge amount on the website. We could add more information to promote the Branch.

H Benton suggested that we also put the strategy document on so it can be downloaded.

R Edgington said that the Branch can have a website through the Legion's own website. Then the Legion will be responsible for any costs. Also, people looking to join Harwell Branch will find the website on the Legion site and can join easily. We can put what we like on it. There are instructions on the MAP.

T Pearson said that she will investigate this. If we move to the Legion address we will no longer need to pay for a separate address (harwellrbl.co.uk).

ACTION: T Pearson to investigate moving the Branch Website to the National Website.

11. VJ 80 DAY FRIDAY 15th AUGUST 2025

The National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) is hosting a Commemoration on 15th August and they are looking for veterans to attend. We have not heard of any beacons being lit. There are no beacons being lit.

R Edgington said that some Branches are organising Commemorations on the weekend before, others on the weekend after. Her Branch is running a drumhead service on the weekend before.

H Benton said that the Far East Campaign was known as the forgotten war. Her father was a veteran. R Edgington said that her grandfather was invalided out from the campaign. There is just the one national event at the NMA.

T Pearson proposed that we obtain two VJ 80 wreaths and lay one at the War Memorial in the High Street and one at the War Graves in the Cemetery.

H Benton said that there should be a small Ceremony and we should publicise that we are doing something.

R Edgington said that she will let us know if she hears anything more.

ACTION: P Cox to order two VJ 80 wreaths.

12. SECRETARY'S REPORT

P Cox reported:

12.1 VE Day

P Cox has written an email to thank Steve Hale and circulated S Haycox's pictures to Branch Members.

12.2 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.

12.3 May Minutes and June Agenda

Minutes and Agenda written and circulated.

12.4 Printing

Printed and distributed the agenda and correspondence report for this meeting, May 2024 Minutes. A comparatively low amount of printing this month again. There will be more next month when the letter is printed.

12.5 Meeting Room

P Cox asked if he should book the room again for another 2 months or meet somewhere else. T Pearson said that if there a lot of people attend in July, we could move to the Village Hall atrium if available.

12.6 Annual Report for Annual Harwell Parish Council meeting May 2025.

This is not on the Parish Council website. We could put it on our website.

12.7 Welfare

No enquiries received since the last meeting.

P Cox said that if we can get some more volunteers, it would be good to restart visiting veterans at home, telephone calls, hospital visits etc, rather than just passing to the Legion 0800 number.

R Edgington said that all enquiries must be directed to the Legion 0800 number. They decide who can best to help the person, then they pass to County caseworkers or Branch visitors as appropriate. This can take some time though.

12.8 Membership

The Branch has 43 members as of the 15th June weekly report on the MAP.
P Sedwards has joined to make 44.

P Cox has not done the welcome letter yet. There is a template on the MAP which can be adapted. We need to do one now that we have another new member.

12.9 Standard

The Standard was paraded at Committee member Geoff Street's funeral by Colour Sergeant V. Sedwards, Didcot Detachment, Army Cadet Force (ACF). Letters of thanks have been sent to V. Sedwards and Didcot ACF for their agreement that V Sedwards could parade in ACF uniform.

S Haycox, who organised the funeral, and a good friend of Mr Street, also stated his thanks to V Sedwards.

P Sedwards said that V Sedwards was very honoured to be considered.

12.10 Correspondence

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

Correspondence from Legion County Office and National Headquarters:

Membership Newsletter June 2025

Articles include:

- Changes to ticket arrangements for Festival of Remembrance
- Reports on Branch activities and Commemorations for VE80.

Central News June 2025

Articles include:

- Report on Annual Conference.
- Changes to ticket arrangements for Festival of Remembrance
- Grants are available for VJ80.
- Reports on Branch activities and Commemorations for VE80.

New Edition of Management Handbook

Latest edition – contains rules for running the Legion at National, County and Branch level.

- Includes AGMs, elections, training requirements for officers, type and frequency of meetings, conference, forming and closing Branches.
- Also available on National RBL website.

Good Branch Guide

- Requirements for Branches and Branch Officers.
- Suggestions for activities and involving communities.

Legion Strategy 2025-2035

- As presented at National Conference 2025.
- Short video and documents titled "Our Story" and an overview of the Strategy.

Standard Bearer's for the Festival of Remembrance 2025 at the Albert Hall

Any Standard Bearers wishing to attend the Festival of Remembrance need to attend the training at Newbury RBL on 8th June.

Branch lists and GDPR

Do not send Branch Membership lists to Legion Clubs. Clubs are separate private enterprises and this would be a breach of GDPR.

Reminder - Festival of Remembrance 2025 Ticket ballot Open

- Ballot closes Tuesday 24th June 2025.
- Ballot day: Wednesday 9th July 2025.
- Successful members notified from Thursday 10th July 2025.

Correspondence from Other Organisations

June 2025 Chilton Chronicle

Contains details of the D Day service and request for members and Committee members by H Benton.

June 2025 Harwell News

No RBL content in this issue.

13. TREASURER'S REPORT

S Haycox reported:

13.1 Branch Funds

Funds held according to the latest statements as of 19th June 2025 are:

HARWELL BRANCH

Branch Funds Initiative (BFI). Account	£ 368
Current Account:	<u>£ 297</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£ 665</u>

13.2 Legacy Transfer for Flypast

S Haycox reminded the meeting that this was submitted in March.

R Edgington said that she had approved the transfer. She will follow this up.

13.3 Legion Online Management Accounts System (LOMAS)

S Haycox said that he had not used LOMAS for some years, but he would be interested in restarting it, though all the missing transactions may need to be added back in.

R Edgington said that she would find out if this is necessary.

13.4 Donation to Branch from Parish Council

S Haycox reported that the £100 donation from Harwell Parish Council has not yet been received.

13.5 Annual Audit

S Haycox asked about the audit for this year.

R Edgington said that after the year end on 30th June, the accounts of all Branches will be examined by the Legion audit team. This is instead of the usual Legion Independent examiners (including R Edgington) or external auditors. The external auditors may not be aware of how Branch funds are allowed to be spent.

Berkshire County branches are the first of these, so we do not have to get the accounts audited as usual but there will be a contact address to send them to. They may ask for vouchers relating to the accounts.

13.6 Meeting Room Payments

P Cox has received the receipt for the room hire for this meeting and May, total £25.20.

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

14. POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER'S REPORT

14.1 D Day 2025

P Cox reported that the wreaths arrived on time but two were damaged of the 20 ordered. He has told the County Poppy Appeal Manager Sarah Brown. He will send these back along with a few more from November and last year's D Day which also arrived damaged. S Brown said that the courier contract is due for renewal soon.

R Edgington added that other Branches had problems with deliveries.

We had a card terminal for the event. This was used in the car park for wreath payments then by H Benton for the bucket collection. We did not use the Toucan app in the end. S Brown collected the card terminal today.

Wreaths

14 wreaths were supplied. Payments received so far are:

8 by cash and cheque: £250

3 by card: £75

2 by invoice £57.50 (subject to confirmation).

Total £382.50

One more wreath payment is due for from the Branch, and one for the two badges.

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

Bucket collection:

H Benton reported that £85.37 cash was collected in the buckets and £30 was collected on the card terminal, **total £115.37.**

14.2 November Appeal 2024

P Cox has sent the merchandise back, including the school packs, due to lack of storage space.

14.3 Annual PAO Seminar

P Cox said that he is unlikely to attend. He did have a brief chat with S Brown this morning. H Benton said that she may not be available for personal reasons.

14.4 G Street Funeral Wreath

P Cox supplied a B wreath to S Haycox for Mr Street's funeral. He made a payment of £20 after the meeting.

14.5 November 2025 Appeal

Orders open from 3rd June. We will probably order in August (main orders should be in by 31st August). H Benton said that she may not be available for personal reasons.

14.6 Chilton and Upton Pubs VE 80 Collection

H Benton said that the George and Dragon in Upton is not in the Harwell Poppy Appeal district. We checked with S Brown, and there is no PAO covering this area so we can collect there.

The collecting boxes had not been put out at the pubs as expected, so £9.57 was collected. The owner of the pubs generously donated £100, **total £109.57**.

The owner may run an event for VJ day. H Benton will supply collecting boxes or buckets if requested.

H Benton has paid in all cash and cheques, over £600 has been collected recently.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 Awards

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

16. CONFIRM DATE AND VENUE OF JUNE MEETING

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

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 18:24 hours.

Minutes approved at the Branch meeting held on _____

Chair _____