

December 2023

Christmas message from the Branch Chairman:

I would like to thank everyone for all their efforts this year and I wish you and all your families a very happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Best wishes Jimmy Keywood



This magnificent WW1 Tommy Christmas Tree was designed and constructed by our Vice Chair Jon Duckworth. A man with many hidden talents.

Poppy Appeal 2023

Hot off the press!! The total raised at this year's Poppy Appeal for the Harleston & District Branch was an amazing **£8357.36**. This was almost £500 more than last year's total. The Static Stand at the Co-op raised a massive **£1321.13** over the 2 collection days and The Market Place Static Stand raised **£734.87** over 3 collection days. Maybe, next Poppy Appeal we should have a Static Stand outside the Co-op on the Wednesday as well if we can get enough volunteers.

Vice -Chairman's Ruminations

As another year draws to a close, I am struck by how quickly it seems to have passed and when you make a list, how much we can reflect upon as a job well done. We have a great deal to be grateful for, but I do not think there is room for complacency and while we have enjoyed a number of social events and commemorations, the closure of the Dickleburgh Branch in their centennial year has given me cause to look at our Branch.

I have come to realise that there are two things that threaten the wellbeing of an organisation - the desire for moving forward and the resistance to change!

Terry's comprehensive review of this year's notable achievements speak for itself, but I would like to suggest that as we reflect on what we have achieved, we spend a few moments thinking about what we want from

our Branch next year, how we set about achieving it and what can my contribution be. It is perfectly acceptable to want things to remain the same but often the best way to appreciate something is to imagine what life would be like without it.

Terry ensures that as a branch we function extremely well, and Steve's stewardship of our funds makes us fiscally compliant. As guardians of Harleston's fallen, we have made positive progress improving the environs around the War Memorial and ensuring the Briar Farm estate pays due reverence to those members of the RAF and USAAF crews who perished in that area. Year on year our orchestration and execution of the Poppy Appeal is rewarded with increasingly impressive totals. Our Social fund is healthy, and the resumption of the Community Café and a healthy association with the Masonic Lodge gives us an opportunity to engage in fellowship and social wellbeing activities. All in all, there is much to be proud of, a great deal to want to protect and some aspects to improve upon. I believe social interaction is key and must be at the centre of our purpose. A suggestion of a veteran's breakfast club deserves serious contemplation as well as a long overdue trip to the national arboretum or venues closer to home.

As I seem to have strayed into the murky world of managerial and motivational speak, it might be worth mentioning another previously much used mantra; people rarely succeed unless they enjoy what they are doing.

Thank you for your support this year, my aim for 2024 is to attract more of our membership to join in socially. This will involve looking at what currently is on offer and determining what is required to attract more participation.

A personal objective of mine has always been to finish what I start (2 chocolate oranges and a box of Maltesers so far) I will end this here with a final piece of motivational advice and Clare and my best wish for the season and for the new year.

Always give 100% - unless giving Blood!

Kind regards
Jon Duckworth
Certa Cito

A look back at some of the branch affairs during 2023 included:

The production of Branch Polo Shirts which were procured by Tim Shields and are proudly worn by members at Branch Meetings and other events (modelled by Gary & Claire in the picture below). There is also a baseball cap available as well. Thank you Tim for organising these polo shirts.

The Branch 'Wedding of the Year' saw two very popular branch committee members get married and we were happy to celebrate with the happy couple Gary and Claire Cropley at our March social evening.



Thursday 13th April was the funeral of our Branch Padre Revd Gerald Epps. The funeral service held at St Mary's Church in Diss was attended by several branch members.

The World War One Tablecloth was mounted on the wall in the social room of the Memorial Leisure Centre where we hold our meetings. This has given it greater access to the wider public in Harleston and can easily be viewed at any time. Terry Pegg & John Graham were on hand during the Kings Coronation weekend to help with giving out information on the tablecloth.

On Friday 12th May we held a social evening to mark the 60th anniversary of the when the last national serviceman was demobbed and it was well attended. It was great to hear some of the stories by the national service veterans and branch members were fully engaged with the veterans.

Friday 26th May a branch quiz team called 'Molly & the Legionnaires' participated in a quiz to raise money for the pink ladies tractor run at the Pennoyer centre in Pulham St Mary.



Harleston Beer Festival was held on Saturday 17th June which coincided with the start of Armed Forces Week. As usual the Harleston & District Round Table hosted a great event and gave extra tokens to armed forces veterans. It was great to see Branch Members in attendance wearing their Branch Polo Shirts.



Our Vice Chair Jon Duckworth had a remarkable effort engaging with shops and organisations to get involved with the '**Salute our Forces**' campaign during the **Armed Forces Week**. Thank you to all those involved.









27th July, we held an 'act of remembrance' to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the signing of the Korean Armistice and to honour the lives lost during that conflict.

Harleston Remembers:

A Thank You letter on Behalf of Harleston & District Royal British Legion

I don't think there is any doubt that the town-folk of Harleston and the surrounding areas take the paying of respect to those who made the ultimate sacrifice, extremely seriously and although the Royal British Legion (RBL) act as custodians of the perpetual memory, it is always extremely moving and gratifying to see the community coming together for both the Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday services.

The start of 'Remembrance-tide' (as the launch of the Poppy Appeal and collective services is known) in Harleston is marked by the display of wreaths in D A Browne's Butchers. It has become an ever-evolving spectacle, but it must be remembered that the work involved in ordering and preparing the wreaths falls to Terry Pegg (our Branch Secretary and pivotal to all aspects of local military history). In conversation with Andy (and recorded in an article in the Diss Express), it was interesting to discover that the refurbishment of the shop front was specifically designed to ensure the wreath display was illuminated to achieve the most dramatic effect.

This year 42 Wreaths were displayed and/or laid and the perennial problem of how the display at Browne's could be replicated at the War Memorial became the focus of attention for Terry and I.

Like all successful outcomes, the key was a collaborative effort shared by many but brought to cohesion by a desire to spruce up the Memorial Garden and enhance the community space that is already well used for rest and contemplation (and lunch!).

Cllr Clive Digby and the Planter Volunteer Group, as well as the Roundtable, were committed to refreshing the area and developing a seasonal planting scheme, and a successful presentation to the Town Council resulted in an endorsement of a wreath stand designed to be visually stunning when fully adorned but also when 'undressed' during the summer months.

Funding always stifles initiative but, in our case, we have always been grateful for the legacy donations provided by the Harold Dean Trust and the continuous generosity and support of Harleston Town Football Club. Both organisations are extremely humble and modest about their philanthropic endeavours, but both were heartened to see their generosity being converted into something lasting and tangible rather than being absorbed into less visible but nonetheless, necessary running costs.

The stand itself was built by Steve Jones, a modest but extremely talented and generous craftsman from Bury St Edmunds, who gave freely of his time and expertise. The finishing artistic flourishes were provided by Mandy Carter, and I hope you share our view that the mission was well executed and truly accomplished.



As mentioned, Remembrance-tide encompasses the national period of remembrance and the Poppy Appeal. It is the focus of effort by our branch membership and again a wholly collaborative endeavour by our community. Poppy collection trays and mechanise have been abundant in our shops, schools and we have been pleased at the reception our members and highly engaging Cadet troop have received whilst employed on Poppy selling duties on the Marketplace, outside the Co-op and around the town.

Sadly, there was an increasing number of comments about the lack of Poppy sellers out on the street in Norwich and other major towns and locations. A sign of the times perhaps but there is no doubt from our viewpoint that engaging with the public pays dividends, and time spent reflecting or reminiscing about a family member or friend's service is never wasted.

Our Poppy Appeal Organiser, Mandy Carter, works extremely hard behind the scenes and is grateful for all the assistance she receives. The generosity of our community is always humbling, particularly in these stringent economic times; the Poppy Appeal is competing in a very crowded field of worthy causes. Our total from collecting boxes, fund raising activities and collections from the churches of the 7 Churches Benefice was a remarkable £8357.36

During an interview on Park Radio in early November, the appearance of poppies on lampposts, street furniture and shop awnings was remarked upon, but its origin unclear. Each Poppy bears the name of an individual who is commemorated on our War Memorial. The Poppies are placed by Rosie Riches, to continue an initiative that was started by Linda Ling, as previous Town Clerk. The striking and touching notion was to bring the names of the town-folk, whose sacrifice is immortalised on the memorial, back into the streets where they lived, loved, shopped and socialised but sadly never returned. If you hadn't noticed the Street Poppies before, please look out for them next year and ensure their names are never forgotten.

Last year's Remembrance Weekend was in danger of being remembered for all the wrong reasons but I, like many in the Armed Forces community, find this period difficult and regard everyday as Remembrance Day. We take great comfort in the generosity of spirit demonstrated by our community and on behalf of all our branch members and those unable to voice their gratitude – **THANK YOU** – Lest We Forget

Jon Duckworth
Vice Chair, Harleston & District Branch, Royal British Legion

Happy 90th Birthday – Bert Herrington



On Sunday 3rd December there was a 90th birthday party for our former Branch President Bert Herrington at the Mayfield's Care Home in Long Stratton. Bert was well respected in the community and present at the party were family, friends and colleagues from the RBL, The Rotary Club and The Police Officers Association.

Bert, a former RAF National Serviceman and Police Officer joined our branch in 1991 and served as Secretary, Poppy Appeal Organiser, Treasurer and President. At his party Terry presented Bert with an RBL Certificate of Appreciation for his dedicated service and valuable contribution to the Branch.

We must also say thank you to two very important benefactors who without their help we would not be able to achieve our aims of supporting the Armed Forces Community and be an effective national custodian of remembrance.

Firstly, The Harold Dean Charity. They raise funds from renting out fishing rights on a complex of lakes and this is then distributed to local and national charities and we are very grateful for their support every year.

Secondly, a massive thank you to Adam Mullin the Chairman of Harleston Town Football Club and all the players, backroom staff and spectators for all your support to The Harleston & District Branch of The Royal British Legion, the Armed Forces Community and the memories of Harleston's fallen soldiers.



Looking forward to 2024:

An important date for your diaries – 6th June 2024

Remembering D-Day 80 years on

Thursday 6th June 2024 marks 80 years since the D-Day landings, the largest amphibious operation in history, which marked the beginning of the liberation of France and Western Europe.

It drew on the knowledge of meteorologists, scientists, inventors, the combined might of militaries of 13 nations and assistance of tens of thousands of members of the French Resistance. It involved vast deceptions and secret operations to ensure success.

It's no surprise that D-Day has earned its place as one of the most significant battles in history.

We will no doubt hold a commemorative event on the 6th June 2024 with an 'Act of Remembrance' at the War Memorial. Further details will be published in the New Year.

Harleston soldier Edward Jack Warden whose name is on our War Memorial died on D Day 6th June 1944 in France, aged 30. Edward was in the 1st Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment. He is buried at Ranville War Cemetery, Calvados, France.