

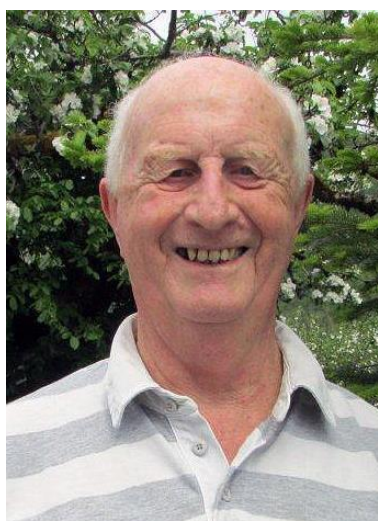


HAMPSHIRE LINK

DECEMBER 2014

CHARITY NO 219279

Bill calls time after six busy years of service



As December 2014 sneaks up on us I'm made aware that this is my last opportunity to send a message of thanks to one and all for your comradeship and support throughout my 6 years as County Chairman.

Those years have flown by leaving me with so many good memories of the events we've taken part in together. Like the many enjoyable Branch social occasions, parades, services, concerts and County events such as the 90th Celebration Cathedral concerts.

There have been Poppy Walks, Festivals of Remembrance at Southampton and more recently as a partner to the Battle of Cheriton Project, a most successful weekend with the battle re-enactors.

We have worked through the 'Pathway for Growth' and the changes which have taken place including the County Office move to the new Area Office in Southampton, the list could go on and on. I've been privileged to represent Hampshire at many Annual Conferences, National seminars and Regional meetings.

I now intend to take a 'gap year' out, as the young'uns say, although I've already got a new job at the new 'Pop-In Centre' in Southampton. You'll see me there each Thursday doing my bit.

I wish my successor, John Smith, every success in the coming years and thank him for all his help as Vice Chairman. I'm sure he will get your unstinting support in his term of office.

With Remembrance time now concluded we can look forward to celebrating Christmas. So on behalf of myself and all the Hampshire County staff, Officers and County Committee I wish to thank you all most sincerely for your valued help and send you sincere best wishes for a happy and peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Bill Bates – County Chairman



W. J. Bates MBE

BRANCH NEWS

Remembrancetide Round-Up

The Mayor of Havant, Mrs Marjorie Smallcorn, received the first Poppy as the Havant & District Branch launched their annual Poppy Appeal at the end of October.

Not only did Branch Chairman Dave Argue present the Mayor with her Poppy but he handed Poppy Appeal Organiser Mrs Olive Rush a cheque for £1,000 to start the Appeal ball rolling. He was supported at the launch in The Plaza by Standard Bearer Malcom Burgess and other members of the branch.



Members of the Bishops Waltham & District Branch gathered around the war memorial at St. Peter's Church in the village to observe the two-minute silence on Remembrance Sunday.

The Revd. James Hunt conducted the Service of Remembrance which was attended by Branch President Vice-Admiral Sir James Weatherall KVCO, KBE, DL, Branch chairman David Harrison, secretary Ruth Harrison and Standard Bearer Martin Wiltshire while the Union Flag was carried by John Chubb.

Women's Section chairman Mrs P Carpenter was joined by her treasurer and others from her branch and members of the Bishops Waltham community also paid their respects at the short service.

Veteran 'over the moon'

Arctic Convoy veteran Jack Bird finally received the Ushakov medal awarded to him by the Russian Federation on Remembrance Sunday in November. The medal, presented to him at Bordon's war memorial by Chief Inspector Beth Pirie of the Hampshire Constabulary on behalf the Russian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, was given at the behest of Russian Premier Vladimir Putin.

Shortly after the ceremony Jack telephoned relatives in Australia to tell them about his medal. Unfortunately for Jack, someone standing at the war memorial for the Bordon Act of Remembrance took a photograph and put it on Facebook. By the time he contacted his relatives they already knew about the presentation but that couldn't spoil the moment and Jack was clearly 'over the moon'.

At the same ceremony the Arctic Convoy veteran was presented with a certificate on behalf of Hampshire Royal British Legion. It recognised his courage and achievement and helped to make it a very special day for Jack Bird.

Remembrance Sunday was also a special day for Bordon's new Branch chairman Steve Johnson who marched at the Cenotaph in London with a large contingent of Christmas Island Nuclear Veterans.

Generations

Gosport & Alverstoke branch member Ian Eastham is a former member of the Royal Tank Regiment and is running the 'Project Peace' initiative; the restoration of the World War 1 graves in Ann's Hill cemetery in Gosport. His service, past and present, clearly inspired him to write this poem:

Generations

When the final post has sounded, and there are no more tears,
and no more flags are lowered with every passing year,
Should we still remember when peace has come at last?
Just look forward to the future and disregard the past?

Why should we remember, when all is said and done?
Will we cast aside the legacy of a freedom dearly won?
Should we just look forward without a backward thought?
Forgetting what they stood for and why they died and fought.

When you see a gravestone or a name upon a wall,
or see a carved memorial in a quiet village hall,
Remember what they've sacrificed, remember what was lost,
Freedom has a reckoning, peace, it has a cost.

Past and present are intertwined, each and every year,
United by a Poppy red, with a meaning ever clear,
Wear it to remember, its colour seems to say,
Keep us in your memory, don't let us fade away.

Record number of Riders at Southsea



This year's Riders' Branch Remembrance Sunday Service on Southsea Common attracted 725 motorcycles and scooters along with a crowd exceeding 1,000 people.



A very civil servant



County Vice-President Brian Soffe reaches two important landmarks this month. He has now completed 40-years of service with the Hampshire County Committee and celebrates his birthday on December 25.

Born on Christmas Day 1930, Brian's working life began in Southampton Docks before he served for five years as an Engineering Officer in the Mercantile Marine. He then worked in the Oil Industry for almost 40 years. But this was just a small part of this remarkable man's life.

A turning point came when he joined the Copythorne Branch of the Royal British Legion in 1967 and was immediately elected to the branch committee. Since then Brian has served Copythorne as secretary, chairman, president and vice president. He was first elected to serve Hampshire at the county conference in November 1974, being one of six nominated representatives from the South West Sector.

He has served with seven County Presidents, from Brigadier Kenneth Pearce Smith OBE through to our present Brigadier David Harrison JP, DL. He has also served with seven other County Chairmen, including the present one, Bill Bates MBE, and with 12 County Vice Chairmen and six County Treasurers. Brian is currently serving his third spell as County Treasurer since 1977.

He still has a copy of the minutes of his first County Committee meeting in the County Office at 22 Clifton Road, Winchester which was held on December 21, 1974. "Too many changes have taken place in that time to bore you with details," he admits, "and my memory plays a part in that too! However, there have been 12 different versions of the Royal Charter issued over that period. And we do have to keep up-to-date, don't we?"

I have always enjoyed my association with the County," he adds, "and I have been able to represent Hampshire on the South Eastern Area Council from 1981 until 1993 (when Areas closed) and to represent the S E Area on the National Council for 8 years between 1990 until 1999."

Along the way he has also been a founder member, secretary, treasurer and chairman of the Earl Mountbatten Branch, a Case Worker, member of the Totton Eling Branch and held key positions on the Hampshire Holding Branch. Additionally he led numerous sub-committees in many of the local, area and national groups.

"I felt particularly privileged to attend the annual service in London," says Brian, "and be with the National Council to lead the march past at the Cenotaph and to be with them at the salute at Horse Guards Parade each year." Needless to say, he has received numerous Certificates of Appreciation, the Gold Badge and was awarded National Life Membership in 2000.

"I do have to say that I had received considerable support from my wife, Dawn until her passing in November 2000," says Brian. "I could not begin to count the number of marvellous people that I have met within the organisation across the country and I count a great many of them as friends."

To his Legion accomplishments add his service as a Parish Councillor, school governor and the support given to several other community organisations. Brian was convinced he had retired in 2007 but remains a vital part of the County machine, helping out wherever he can and promising to help the Royal British Legion for as long as he is able. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Another successful Scramble

Brian Chapman, Mike Burrows, Dave Goldring and Henry Hope walked away with a few nice bottles of wine plus some tasty confectionary for their better halves after winning the 12th annual Texas Golf Scramble, organised by the Hampshire Royal British Legion Golf Society.

The autumn event, for four-man teams, was held once again at the Paultons Park course on October 20 and is primarily a fun day ending with a few pints and an informal meal. Old Basing entered three of the five teams competing but the quartet, describing themselves as 'Three Old Men and a Handsome Sailor', won the day going round in par 71 but scoring a net 54.6 after handicap deduction.

Bob Blandford's 'Eastleigh Oddballs' (Malcolm Corbridge and Dave Mullett making up the three-ball group) were second, their gross round was 77 but a 20.4 handicap helped hugely. The 'Old Basing Posse', comprising Steve Western, Aiden Brophy, Paul Allaway and Rick Bourne nicked third place on count-back, their 2-under par 69 burdened by a 11.6 handicap.

Old Basing collected most of the individual prizes, Aiden Brophy winning the Longest drive on the 7th, Mike Burrows taking the Nearest the Pin prize on the signature 15th whilst Fawley's Ron Smith took the Nearest the Pin in 2 shots on the short 18th.

County chairman Bill Bates and his wife Margaret joined the 19 players at the presentation meal and the raffle raised £49 for the Poppy Appeal and sales of Poppy Lapel Badges added another £32 to the Poppy Appeal kitty.

After presenting the prizes and thanking all who took part it was Bill Bates who took the accolades on this his final year as County Chairman. Secretary Rick Bourne expressed the appreciation of the Golf Society for his continuous and generous support over many years and said that both Bill and Margaret would be very much missed at future events.



Fair day's pay



Hampshire County President Brigadier David Harrison travelled to Romsey on Remembrance Sunday and having taken the salute at the parade he visited the Town Hall to accept a cheque for £800 on behalf of the Royal British Legion.

Following a very successful village fair Terry Hamer, director of the Nursling & Rownhams May Fair group, presented two cheques to service charities; to Brigadier Harrison and Major Mark Stephenson of the Royal Engineers who represented Help for Heroes.

The generous gift from Mr Hamer (above right) and his May Fair team helped to boost the 2014 Hampshire Poppy Appeal Fund which, thanks to Branch members, supporters and their local communities, exceeded the amount raised in 2013.

Christmas is coming ... so is Conference

Your County Conference Committee met on November 21 to consider the programme for the 2015 Conference which is to be held at the Jubilee Hall in Bishops Waltham on Saturday, January 24. Steph Harris, our Membership Support Officer, will be sending the relevant paperwork to delegates shortly.

This year's conference promises to be something special and there are three very good reasons why it is important that all branches are represented.

Firstly, the RBL National Chairman, John Chrisford (right) is the guest speaker. We not only hope that every branch sends a delegate but also invite members to attend as guests to hear John talk about the current state of the Royal British Legion.



The Legion is about to introduce a number of significant changes that will impact on Legion members. Mariëlle Postill, the RBL Head of Membership, is also speaking at conference about these changes.

An absence of nominations to the County Committee has meant that for some years committee members have been re-elected unopposed. This year we have three members standing for re-election and ten new nominees contesting nine committee places.

This is another reason why it is important that branches send delegates and participate in the democratic process to select the best possible candidates and re-vitalise the County Committee.

Regular visitors to Conference will know that a cold lunch is normally available but recently our caterer offered to provide a hot meal (chicken pie and veg) for the same price. The Conference Committee have taken up this offer and those that have not already booked can do so by contacting Steph Harris before January 9.

Last year branches donated an impressive array of draw prizes and we would appreciate it if delegates could bring similar donations to the Conference on January 24.

Finally, the winners of Hampshire cups and trophies have been selected and we ask all members presented with awards last year to return them to the Area Office before Conference or assure Steph Harris that they will bring them along to Jubilee Hall on the day.

The Truce Game

On Wednesday December 17 the British Army representative team will entertain the German Bundeswehr at Aldershot Town's Stadium to commemorate 100 years since the 1914 Christmas "Game of Truce". The 2014 game will kick off at 7.30pm.

The match has been arranged to commemorate the centenary of one of the most iconic moments of the First World War when soldiers from both sides put down their weapons and crossed into "no-man's land" in Ypres, Belgium to share an impromptu ceasefire.

Advance tickets (Adults £3, Concessions £1) are available from Aldershot Town FC or by phoning 01252 320 211. There will also be tickets available at the turnstiles on the night.



Soldiers' Journey

Southampton's SeaCity Museum is offering FREE entry* to its *Soldiers' Journey* exhibition to badge wearing armed forces veterans and merchant seamen. This offer is open for the length of the exhibition which closes on January 11.

Soldiers' Journey explores Hampshire's contribution to World War One highlighting the county's critical role in the movements of service men, horses and equipment to the frontlines. The Port of Southampton was the main port of military embarkation with over 8 million troops departing between 1914 and 1918.

Hampshire became the gathering ground for these soldiers and huge camps were formed in and around Southampton, Winchester and Basingstoke.

The exhibition explores the impact on the lives of local people and businesses during this extraordinary time and follows the soldiers' journey through Hampshire before leaving through the port to go overseas.

Special exhibits include a Victoria Cross medal, presented to Southampton-born Daniel Beak and displayed in Southampton for the first time, a caravan used as an ambulance on the front and as an officer's hut and a recreated dock scene which will bring the wartime dockside to life.

There is a ship's bell from the famous ocean liner Mauretania which served as a troop ship and hospital ship during the First World War and a 65-foot long mural which weaves a story around the impact of the war on people's lives in Hampshire. To find out more about *Soldiers' Journey* visit www.seacitymuseum.co.uk or call 02380 833 007.

EVENTS DIARY

WHAT'S ON

Tuesday, December 4, 2014

Peace and Goodwill Carol Concert
Aldershot Town Football Ground
7.30pm
Admission £2.50 + programme
For Details:
See the Aldershot FC website

Wednesday, December 17, 2014

The Truce Game
The British Army v The German Army
Aldershot Town Football Ground
Kick-off - 7.30pm
Admission: Adults £3, Concessions £1
For Details:
See the Royal British Legion website

Saturday, January 24, 2015

2015 Hampshire RBL County Conference
Jubilee Hall, Bishops Waltham
10.30am
Non-delegates and guests welcome
For Details:
sharris@britishlegion.org.uk

POPPY APPEAL

Thanks to CFRs, PAOs and PACs

The County Chairman, Officers and members of the County Committee wish to extend their grateful thanks to our two Hampshire Community Fundraisers, Clare Peppiatt and Dave Moore, all branch Poppy Appeal Organisers and the army of Poppy Appeal Collectors that have worked so hard this year to generate another impressive end-of-year Poppy Appeal total.

The Royal British Legion is part of a very crowded charity marketplace, our membership numbers are dwindling, finding new collectors is becoming increasingly difficult and yet, not only do these loyal supporters match last year's total but they improve on it. Our thanks go out to each and everyone involved in this year's Poppy Appeal collection and we hope you found it enjoyable and rewarding.

REMEMBRANCE

Royal Albert Hall



County Standard Bearer, Dave Graham, and Karen Pearson, who carried the Hampshire Women's Section standard at the Royal Albert Hall for the first time, reported on being anxious, honoured and exhausted after their long hours of rehearsals and performances at this year's Festival of Remembrance. We thank them for representing Hampshire so competently at the big national occasion.

LEST YOU FORGET ...

A polite reminder

Our County President, Brigadier David Harrison, has been busy this year visiting and supporting a number of branches. We must stress that Branches eager to invite the President to a function must do so through the Hampshire Membership Support Officer, Steph Harris.

Brigadier Harrison wears many hats; as a Deputy Lieutenant, a JP, an officer with St John Ambulance, a military museum trustee and as a member of various Army Associations.

He has an extremely busy diary which our MSO helps him to manage. We have quarterly meetings to ensure that he is not overburdened with Hampshire RBL commitments. He is more likely to accept an invitation if it comes through the agreed channels.

STANDARD BEARERS

Songs (and letters) of Praise

Hampshire played host to BBC Television's "*Songs of Praise*" which was broadcast live from the Garrison Church in Aldershot on November 9. At the producer's request County Parade Marshal Steve Forward assembled a team of Standard Bearers from branches across Hampshire. Following the programme, BBC producer Karen Hannah wrote to Steve saying: "Thank you for organising the Standard Bearers ... You did a terrific job and added much to the programme. I know you put a lot of time into finding people but they were excellent on the day and I couldn't have asked for more."

LEST WE FORGET

Our sincere condolences to the family and friends of these members.

Mr A J Downer, Park Gate

Mrs E Elkins, Wellow & District

Mr R W Frampton, Worthies

Mr T E Gittoes, Park Gate

Lt Cdr A F King, Brockenhurst

Mr B F Lock, Wickham

Mr D Ludlow, Fordingbridge

Mr A G Murray, Earl Mountbatten

Mr D Ross, Netley & Hamble

Mr E G Villiers, Fawley & District

SEND US YOUR NEWS

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to *Hampshire Link* during 2014. We hope you have enjoyed reading the contents of our monthly magazine and if you have information about your pre-Christmas branch activities please send them to the e-mail address below. News arriving before Christmas Day will be included in the January edition. If you are having difficulty accessing the county newsletter please don't hesitate to contact:

jshantsrbl@hotmail.com

ALL OTHER ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE CONTACT CENTRE ON

0808 8028080