

## **VISIT TO FAKENHAM OFFICE OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - 3<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2009**

A number of those members who lunched at Fakenham on 3<sup>rd</sup> April attended a pre-arranged meeting at the Fakenham office, where we were given an introduction to the work of the county office. Fakenham is the Legion's administrative centre for the whole of Norfolk, and is staffed by just five people, Kate Williams, The County Manager, (who gave us the informative talk), Shirley Way, The County Secretary, (who spent most of the time making tea and coffee for us!), the Welfare Officer, Rob Sandles-Bowles, Kate's PA, Karen Travers, and a newly appointed Money & Benefits Adviser who is very busy already, assisting a large number of people with financial difficulties, although many of these stem from some time ago rather than directly from the current situation in the world of finance.

Mentioning the success of the 2008 Poppy Appeal's mail out of poppies to be inscribed with messages of remembrance and dedication and planted at the Menin Gate, Kate said that a similar scheme would be in place for this year's 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings, when thousands of Union flags will be planted on Sword beach in Normandy, where a commemorative service will be organised by the Legion. Many other events will be organized on both sides of the Channel, from a service in Bayeux cathedral to picnics in Portsmouth, Weymouth, Coventry and Christchurch.

Kate was able to tell us about a new development about to be launched in Norfolk: a fleet of handymen in vans bearing the Legion logo prominently. These are carefully vetted people who will be available to do the kind of small domestic jobs which are beyond the capabilities of many people, but which are considered by most tradesmen as "too small to be worthwhile".

Some discussion ensued about the Legion's current "Return to rationing" campaign, and the belief that the government finds it easy to opt out of its responsibilities when charities like ours are available to assist a sector of society (like Armed Forces veterans).

Unfortunately, Kate had to depart promptly for a management meeting, and because of work and personal commitments, no-one else from the office was available to join us for lunch after all. However, a warm welcome was given, and a sincere invitation to members to call in and meet the county staff any time you would like to do so.