

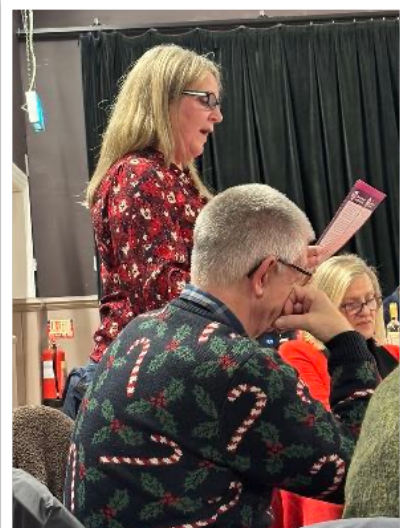
# BRANCH NEWSLETTER

## Chairman's Message

We are fortunate that the number of members of our Branch is holding steady. Hopefully by continuing to offer a positive experience to members we can grow it further. The message from the Surrey County conference this year was that elsewhere RBL membership has continued to fall. However, both the new President and new National Chairman of the Royal British Legion are keen to change this by finding new, more attractive ways to help people, both young and old, to join. They are particularly keen to encourage more women as women currently make up only a quarter of RBL membership. Windlesham has an active, busy Branch with a strong committee and we extend a warm welcome to new members. Please help us by suggesting to your friends, neighbours and families that they join us, so that we can build on these firm foundations.

## Christmas Carols

A very big thank you to everyone who supported the Branch Carol Evening on 9th December and who kindly made or donated mince pies. Your Vice Chairman is still trying to work off the Christmas



excesses consumed that evening.

A big thanks also to our stand-in Padre, Rod Sanders, Paul Bailey and his

fellow musicians and to those members who kindly read lessons, sang beautifully or purchased raffle tickets. A great way to end the year.

## Branch Trip to The National Memorial Arboretum



The Branch is combining forces with our neighbouring branch in Chobham to run a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on Wednesday 9th April. The cost of the trip will be £25 per person.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Linda Booth or Chris Blackwell.

## Danuta Maria Allen

On the 14th November 2024, every pew of St Ann's Church, Bagshot was taken as family and many, many friends gathered to pay their respects to Danuta Allen. There was standing room only - it was a beautiful and dignified service befitting of someone so popular and well respected.

Danuta, and her husband, Richard joined the Branch in 2014 and were quickly spotted by the then Branch President, David Pipe. Initially, David approached Richard to be Branch Secretary but Richard responded saying "You don't want me, you need my Danuta" and after some gentle persuasion, Danuta took on the Secretary duties becoming Branch Organiser-in-Chief.



Danuta, the daughter of Polish parents who lost everything as a result of the Second World War, grew up in Nottingham where her parents had settled to rebuild their lives at the end of the war. She was a capable and diligent student and studied Pharmacy at Kings' College, London. For the last twenty years of her career she worked for Moss the Chemist in Yateley, dispensing medicine to an appreciative local community.

Danuta and Richard met through a lonely hearts advert in the Personal Column of The Star free-paper. For the pharmacist, the chemistry was instant and after 18 months, they were married. From then on they were inseparable, indulging their passion for adventure and travel for the next 37 years of marriage together.

Sadly, Danuta was diagnosed with Mesothelioma, a type of lung cancer caused by exposure to asbestos and after a very brave battle, she passed away peacefully on Friday 11th October with her beloved Richard at her side.

Danuta was a wonderful woman. As Branch Secretary, not only was she intimidatingly organised, she was genuinely caring and thoughtful, someone who would go out of her way to make sure members were put first. She ensured that those who were unable to attend regularly were visited, kept up to speed with Branch goings-on and supported when they needed help. She kept the Committee in order and made sure the Branch was the best in the County. She will be hugely missed.

Our thoughts and best wishes go to Richard and to Danuta's family. She was one in a hundred million.

## A Marshal's view of The Windlesham Pram Race



Yours truly and my brother marshalled at the junction of Pound Lane and Church Road for this year's Windlesham Pram Race on Boxing Day. I got to wear my high-vis trousers with my brother wore my high-vis vest – no photos of us I'm afraid.

Arriving at our appointed marshalling post before 10am - no lie-in for us - we were concerned that about the lack of professional Road Closure Marshalls. A worried Chief Marshal, arriving on his bicycle, was happier a little later when the

Road Closed signs were in place, as we were too.

It's over 10 years ago that I last visited the Pram Race, when I was then mightily impressed with some of the prams. I remember one year an absolutely huge Millennium Falcon made from Styrofoam, and another year an enormous Spitfire. This year, while there was a variety of prams, they were not quite as creative as in the earlier years. Nevertheless, we and the race entrants had plenty of fun.

The pram that most amused me this year was of a Donald Trump-masked person on a dais pushed by people wearing MAGA (Make America Great Again) caps, some in orange face paint. Sadly mixing marshalling with taking photos doesn't make for great photos.



The general atmosphere in the race was of fun and a bit of post-Christmas exercise. Many spectators were walking the course, often accompanied by a dog – goodness knows what the dogs made of the things. When the sweeper lorry came by my duty was done. All round an enjoyable day out, and when I got home after my duty, a cup of tea and a mince pie never tasted better.

Tim Dodds



## Poppy Appeal 2024



The very generous local residents of Windlesham and surrounds did not disappoint again this year as they dug deep into their pockets for the annual Poppy Appeal.

Our Poppy Concert, manned collections at Longacres and the Lightwater Co-Op and the numerous tins posted around the village gathered a near record-breaking £15,036.21, considerably up on 2023's £12,738.15.

Thank you to our selfless collecting team and to all those who supported the Appeal by attending the concert or by dropping a few pounds into a collecting tin somewhere. We have a lot to do this year to match our 2024 efforts.

## The CentrePiece Big Band Poppy Concert

In a refreshing change from our usual event at St John's Church, this year the Branch's annual Poppy Appeal was launched by the stirring sounds of the CentrePiece Big Band, which included our very own Paul Bailey and a number of his Army Medical Service Band colleagues.

The concert brought together local music lovers and Branch members who were treated to a mix of classics from Glen Millar to Count Basie. Hosted at the Windlesham Club & Theatre, the event raised both spirits and funds for the Royal British Legion, with proceeds added to our annual total.

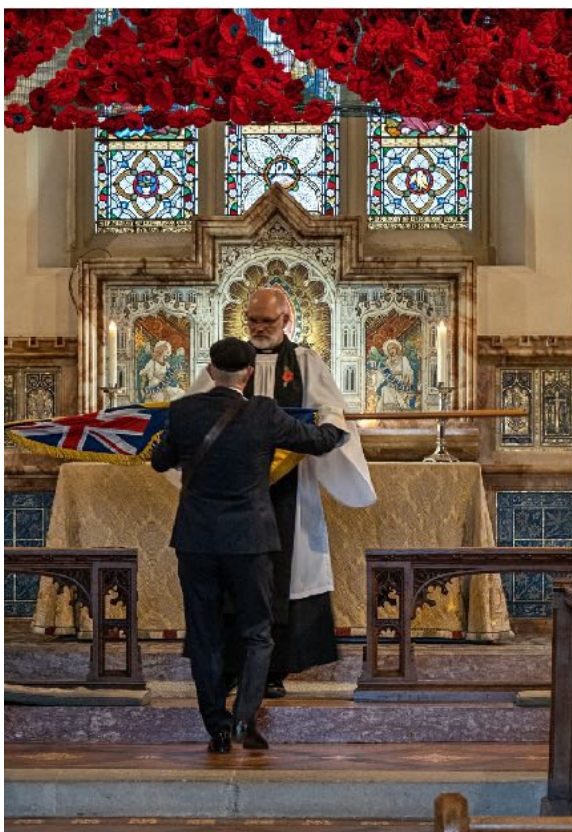
In addition to the foot tapping music, the audience were treated to a lavishly presented raffle courtesy of Kathy and her team which added a further £225 to the total.

All in all it was a very successful evening which got the Appeal off to a wonderful start.





## Remembrance 2024 in Pictures





## Branch Community Support

Our Branch Community Support network is running well but we are a small team and could do with some additional volunteers. It is not an onerous duty and indeed should be the task of everyone in the Branch. Many of you are already doing this (though you may not recognise it as "Branch Support") by visiting friends and neighbours and lending a helping hand. If anyone knows of someone who may need assistance - or even just a friendly phone call - please do not hesitate to contact Charles Garraway who leads our BCS team. Each of us has a role to play in both identifying needs and, in simple cases, meeting that need! Charles can be contacted on [charlesgarraway@hotmail.com](mailto:charlesgarraway@hotmail.com) or 01276 24176.

## Programme of Event 2025

### February

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting. Speaker – Vaughan Kent-Payne, “Famous Sandhurst Alumni”

### March

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting. Speaker – Neil Mach, “VE Day in Surrey”

### April

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April - Branch Trip - National Memorial Arboretum

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting. Speaker tbc

### May

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>

- Branch VE Day Celebration - Field of Remembrance
- VE Day Concert - Windlesham Club & Theatre
- Lightwater Village Fete

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting. Speaker - Sebastian Phillips, “The Christmas Truces”

### June

Monday 9<sup>th</sup>. Branch Meeting. - Speaker tbc

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>. Windlesham Village Fete

### July

Monday 14<sup>h</sup>. Branch Meeting. Speaker tbc

### August

Monday 11<sup>th</sup>. Branch Meeting. Speaker tbc