



Harleston Branch

Quartely News sheet

Fall of Singapore 15th Feb 1942

First Quarter 2025
(January –March)

Committee:

Chairman:	John Graham
Vice Chairman:	Sean Fairfield
Secretary:	Rosie Riches
Treasurer:	Steve Cox
Standard Bearer:	Chris Lown
Alternate Standard Bearer:	Steve Berger
Poppy Appeal Organiser:	Mandy Carter
Stores:	Tim Baldry
Entertainment	Steve Barrett

For Harleston and the surrounding villages, the 15th February 1942 represents a very sad day in our war history. During World War 2 there were many local men enlisted in the Royal Norfolk Regiment and were involved in the 'Battle of Singapore'. The Fall of Singapore, took place in the South–East Asian theatre of the Pacific War. The Japanese Empire captured the British stronghold of Singapore, with fighting lasting from 8 to 15 February 1942. Singapore was the foremost British military base and economic port in South–East Asia and had been of great importance to British interwar defence strategy. The capture of Singapore resulted in the largest British surrender in its history.



For some of these men 15th February 1942 was the start of 3 and half years of suffering until their liberation in September 1945. They were forced to engage in the hard labour of constructing railways, roads, airfields, etc. to be used by the Japanese Armed Forces in the occupied areas. Conditions were terrible, punishments were brutal, food scarce, malnutrition widespread and many died of disease. By the time the war was over, a total of more than 30,000 POWs had died from starvation, diseases, and mistreatment of the Japanese.

Sadly, four local men did not survive the ordeal, namely:

Charles Henry Chamberlain, Leonard George Howard, James Robert Loomé and Walter Wisken. (Their names are immortalised on the Harleston War Memorial).



Spare a thought for these other local men who were Prisoners of War., These included:

William Herbert Blyth, Leonard Bertie Bond, Sidney Albert William Brown, Frederick Arthur Chaplin, Gerald Victor Chapman, Ted Flint, Frederick George Gunton, Reginald Jonathon Gunton, Sidney George Hurren, Geoffrey George Murray, Wally Newby, Frank Ernest Rampley, John Stanley Reeder, Leonard Skinner, Frederick George Taylor .

Researched by: RBL branch member Terry Pegg

New Members welcome

Whilst ex service personnel do like to associate with each other at the local branch, it is by no means exclusive to this group. Harleston welcomes all those who would enjoy good company and friendly banter. Why not come along to the Masonic Rooms on the second Friday of each month at 7:30pm. Further information from Harleston.Secretary@RBL.Community



Polo shirt £15
Cap £10

The primary aim of the monthly News sheet is to keep the branch members informed of RBL news and social events throughout the year. All inputs to:

Harleston.Secretary@RBL.Community



Rosie Riches

Secretary profile: Town Council.

Rosie Riches was born into a farming family in Wingfield. On leaving school in 1974 she came to live in Harleston and started work in Barclays Bank. Following the birth of her three children (two boys and a girl), she went to Great Yarmouth college and retrained in Environmental Health. She carried out various jobs in this field before becoming an Area Manager for Adult Education based in Diss. In 2007 she opened the bakery and coffee shop Rich Pickings in Harleston. Finally she ended her very varied work career in the office at Redenhall with Harleston

She has been retired for 3 years and her life has become busier than ever with Grandchildren. Rosie has been a Volunteer for many local roles including sitting on the board of a local charity organisation. Even though she (nor her parents), never served in the Armed Forces Rosie became Secretary of the Harleston branch of RBL in July 2024, on the retirement of Terry Pegg. She is very proud of the way Harleston always remembers its fallen heroes and believes it's so important to realise you don't have to have a direct connection with the British Forces to join the RBL and to enjoy the company of like minded friends.

Burns Night 18th January



Branch members enjoyed the hospitality of the Waveney Valley Lodge as their honoured guests, to celebrate Burns Night 2025. The evening was the usual traditional fare of Haggis, Neeps and Tatties and was held in the Masonic Rooms, Harleston.

Twelve of the RBL Branch members participated and a number of them gave renditions of the Bard's Poems. The evening was finished off in the Cap with RBL members giving a display of the Bagchairs, which proved entertaining to all that saw it.

A sincere thank you to the Harleston Masonic Rooms for hosting the RBL on such a enjoyable evening.



Lights on for the Blind

Our Branch Standard Bearer Chris Lown has been at it again. He's been raising money for a charity close to his heart.



"Guide dogs for the Blind." Each year Chris adorns the

front of his house with as many lights and LED's as possible to raise money for an organisation with a long history of support to all those who need the help of a support dog. Chris has many fund raising initiatives and this culminates his efforts after a year that has seen ups and downs for Chris. It was whilst he was getting the miles in during training (for a 100 mile charity walk), that he was hit by a car and had his knee shattered. All credit to Chris, that a few months later he was able to lead the parade for Remembrance Sunday.

Chris raised £490 for his Lit up house and £1,700 for his charity walks (£2,190 total)



Alfred Ablett DCM VC



Sergeant Alfred Ablett Victoria Cross & Distinguished Conduct Medal (VC & DCM), 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards. In 1841 Alfred Ablett was 12

years old when he turned his back on the family clay trade and joined the army. It was in 1855, whilst he was serving in the trenches at the siege of Sebastopol that he performed an act of calm heroism. When a live shell, with its fuse still burning, landed amongst his fellows, and

(more worryingly) amongst cases of ammunition and gunpowder, Ablett grabbed the shell and threw it clear, disregarding the high possibility of it exploding in his hand and blowing him into various sized pieces. Ablett went on to see action in all the major battles of this campaign, Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava as well as the siege of Sebastopol.

Once retired Sgt Alfred Ablett took over the administration and drilling of the Harleston Volunteers, with the Armoury situated somewhere near the town's market place. He died on 12th March 1897 and is buried at St Andrew's Parish Churchyard, Weybread. It seems only fitting that, when his

body was returned to the church in his home village of Weybread, his funeral was attended by men and N.C.Os from the volunteer regiment he had drilled during his time in Harleston. Sadly his grave lays unmarked and is now lost (although a marble plaque mounted inside the church commemorates his achievement).



Branch Christmas Party

The Branch Christmas party was a resounding success with each person who attended leaving with a Christmas present from the Raffle. 24 prizes were sourced by the Branch Chairman and Vice Chairman (10 consolation prizes of Advent Calendars, were also bought, in case of over attendance). With a further "Money Pudding created by Anne Graham.

It was especially good to see that Branch members made the effort to attend in a Christmas Jumper. Three members were

selected by the committee, as finalists for the coveted Christmas Jumper prize winner. Mr Alan Young, with his "Jingle bells" Jumper; Jim Keywood (Branch President) With his "Snowmen with erect carrot noses" and Greig Terry with his "Postman Pat" were the shortlist members! The Branch voted for Jim and the "Snowmen" Jumper.

All the Branch were encouraged to bring a dish and although we did get many boxes of mince pies we did receive plenty of other sweet and savory dishes, so nobody went without. At the end of the night the trays of food were taken to the "Cap" for the enjoyment of the punters there.

It was a well supported evening and from the feedback it was very well appreciated. Well done to the Committee for providing a entertaining evening.

RN Uckers Night 13th February

Harleston RBL hosted a charity fund raising "Uckers" night at the Swan Hotel on 13th February. The evening incorporated the Royal Navy adaptation of the well known game of Ludo.

"Uckers" has been played by the

Royal Navy since the time of the East India company and Naval domination of the Indies during the 18th / 19th centuries. It is believed to derive from the Indian game of Pachisi.

Prince Harry famously played Uckers whilst part of the Apache

crew on his Operational tour of Afghanistan.

RBL played basic RN ratified Uckers rules!



Branch Chaplain appointment - John Taylor



As we say farewell to Nigel Tuffnell as he moves on to pasture new we welcome our new Branch Chaplain John Taylor. John has lived in Bush Green just outside Pulham St Mary for approximately 35 years. Up until 2012 he ran his own solicitors practice based in Harleston. He began training for lay ministry in the church of England in 2015 and was licensed as a reader in 2017. He then transferred to the Redenhall group of churches including Harleston, Needham, Thorpe Abbots, Brockdish, Billingford and Scole. He is also an

Anna Chaplain which is involved in ministering to the elderly and end of life care. As a Reader he does not carry out weddings or baptisms but does conduct funeral and memorial services. His main hobbies in the winter are field sports particularly shooting and beating and he enjoys gardening in the summer. His dog, although very friendly is no use in either past time. He's extremely honoured to have been asked to be RBL chaplain in Harleston. He aims to be as approachable and as active as the Branch Chaplain as needed. He aims to meet the many branch members as possible during his tenure in post.

Horse Racing night 31st January

Branch members enjoyed a fun night of horse racing, Organised by the Harleston Ladies Tangent, with the help of the Race Coordinator Mr "Sean McCrickik" (Who looked a lot like the branch Vice-Chairman) A fantastic night of fun with many winners and both the supported charities being the biggest winners on the night. The RBL received a cheque



for £110 for the Poppy appeal which was presented on the March meeting. Big thanks to all



Wellington Bomber crash 1942

On the 9th March 1942 a Mark III Wellington Bomber X3643 took off from 9 Squadron RAF Honington at 2008 hrs, it was part of an operation of 9 Aircraft flight, that were tasked for an attack target on Essen in Germany. It was only some 41 minutes later at 2049 hrs that it was requesting a return to base due to engine trouble. A short while after, it was heard by the Bungay Observer Corps Post running on one engine and then by the Harleston Observer Corps Post who heard it circle the town and finally saw it crash in flames at 2121

hrs in the vicinity of Briar Farm and Jays Green. It was only in the air for a total of 1 hour 14 minutes. When the plane crashed all six aircrew were killed.

The Briarswood estate development has Wellington road named after this tragic event. A memorial is being organised with the developers and the RBL committee. The target date for the memorial will be 9th March 2026 on the 84th anniversary and in conjunction with the completion of the development of the site.



Waterloo dinner 27th June 2025

On the occasion of the 210 year anniversary of the battle of Waterloo, the Chairman of the Harleston branch of the RBL, extends a warm welcome to all members, for this evening of historical entertainment.

On 15th June 1815 the Duchess of Richmond "Charlotte Lennox" held a ball at her residence in Brussels. Her Husband Charles Lennox, the 4th Duke of Richmond, was in command of the a reserve force in Brussels,



charged with protecting the city in case Napoleon Bonaparte invaded. All except 3 of Wellingtons high command and Generals attended the ball. This was described as the most famous ball in history.

During dinner Wellington received a message from William Prince of Orange, stating that the French had pushed up the main Charleroi to Brussels road. Lord Wellington planned the defense of Brussels, close to the village of Waterloo.

Wellington had all officers return to their Regiments,

Many of the men who attended the ball would not survive the day.



Hosted by :

"The Marksmans Lodge 9755"

@ Masonic Rooms 19:00-19:30

Cost: £40 pp Contact:

Harles-

ton.ViceChairman@RBL.Community



Funeral of Tom Brendan Hicks Former Coldstream Guardsman



The Branch answered a call from the family of former Coldstream Guardsman Tom Brendan Hicks. Tim Baldry passed on the request from the family to have a military presence at his funeral. Both the chairman Johh Graham and the branch standard bearer Chris Lown attended with a further call out to the area standard bearers. The funeral

took place at Waveney valley crematorium on 26th February.



Veteran's Breakfast club



The Veteran's Breakfast / Brunch club "usually" meets on every second Saturday each month. (After the RBL Friday meeting). The Swan hotel hosts these meetings under the guidance of the Landlord Mr Robin Twigge. All Veterans, Widows and dependants are very welcome. This meeting gives a chance for those vererans who cannot make it to the RBL evening

meetings a chance to enjoy the company of like minded friends. The next meeting is on 12th April 2025

FUTURE EVENTS

The list of events will grow with inputs from all Branch members. Please pass on to the secretary any events that you would like to see listed .

In memorial: Harleston memorial names

Private Bertie Wottwell Whittaker, 2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment, Born in Redenhall and died on 8th January 1917 at Mesopotamia (Iraq), aged 31

Lieutenant Richard Herbert Stote Pemberton, HMS 'Southampton' Royal Navy, Died 11th January 1941 at Sea, aged 32

Sergeant John Frederick Lait, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, His plane was shot down while flying from Italy to Malta. Died 13th January 1942, aged 19.

Squadron Leader (Pilot) Thomas Ivor 'Tim' Matthewson, 86 Squadron, RAF died when his plane was shot down on 12th February 1942. Thomas is buried at The Hague (Westduin) General Cemetry, Netherlands

Private Percy Banyard Cooper 10th Battalion, Norfolk Regiment, died at home on 15th February 1915, aged 19. Percy is buried at Felixstowe (Walton) Cemetry, Suffolk

Gunner Horace Edward Pearce 68 Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery, died on 15th February 1945, in the Netherlands, aged 35. Horace is commemorated at Bergen-op-Zoom war cemetery.

Warrant Officer, CSM, Charles Henry Chamberlain 4th Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment, died on 26th February 1942, aged 34 commemorated at the Singapore Memorial, in Kranji war cemetery

Michael Francis Farley 2nd March 1917 Buried in the Regina Trench Cemetery, France

James Edwin Oxborough 5th March 1916 Listed on the Basra Memorial, Iraq

Arthur Louis Buck 6th March 1917 Buried in St Omer cemetery, France

James Robert Looe (POW) 6th March 1944 Yokohama cemetery, Japan

Frederick Barber 21st March 1918, Buried in Arras Cemetery, France

Dennis William Dowling 21st March 1918, Buried in Manacourt cemetery, France

Sidney Joseph Rayner 27th March 1918, Name on the Pozieres Memorial, France

John Goldsmith 28th March 1918, Buried in the Bienvillers cemetery, France

Calendar dates 2025

Date	Event type	Location	Involvement	Remarks
31.01.2025	Horse Racing	Swan Hotel	RBL & Tangent	Charity: Poppy Appeal
13.02.2025	Uckers Night	Swan Hotel	RBL	Charity: Poppy Appeal
14.03.2025	Branch Meeting	Masonic Rooms	RBL Members	
11.04.2025	80 Anniversary US Memorial	Green Lane	Town Council & RBL Members	3pm at Green Lane memorial
11.04.2025	Social gathering after memorial service	Swan hotel	RBL Members & attendees	Swan Hotel from 4:30pm
08.05.2025	VE Day 80th Anniversary	Harleston Memorial	Town Council & RBL	9am Proclamation 9pm Lamp lighting
09.05.2025	Branch Meeting	Masonic Rooms	RBL Members	7pm for 7:30pm
14.06.2025	Branch Social evening	Masonic Rooms	RBL Members	7pm for 7:30pm
27.06.2025	Waterloo Night	Masonic Rooms	RBL & Freemasons	7pm for 7:30pm