

## **CELEBRATING THE 100<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION AND THE STAFFORD BRANCH AND DEDICATION OF A NEW BRANCH STANDARD**

On Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021 the Stafford Branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL) hosted a Service in the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Stafford, to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RBL and the Stafford Branch, whilst also dedicating a new Centenary Branch Standard and laying to rest the old Standard.

Even with the original planned attendance of “open to all”, being changed at short notice, because of the delay in lifting the final stage in the roadmap for national restrictions, the Church’s safety regulations, allowed 60 invited dignitaries, local Armed Forces representatives and guests to attend. The Service was further supported by the smart turnout of the following Standards and their Bearers (in addition to the Stafford Branch), under the ever watchful eye of the Parade Marshall, Mr Derek Bunting:

- RBL Branches of Stone & Sandford, Kingswinford and Newcastle & Chesterton District
- Royal Air Force Association – Stafford Branch
- Royal Engineers Association – Stafford Branch
- Burma Star Association
- Staffordshire Regiment Association – Stafford Branch
- Army Cadet Force (Staffordshire)
- Army Cadet Force (Stafford)

Photographs and a video of the full service has been kindly provided by Paul Milgate-Scarrott. Paul’s excellent works can be found at either of the following:

- <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/stafford/previous-events/church-service-3-july-2021-centenary-dedication-of-new-standard>
- <https://www.facebook.com/StaffordRBL>



Picture (by Paul Milgate-Scarrott) – Standards paraded in The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Stafford, on the 3 July 2021

The "Order of Service" included:

- Prayers read by:
  - The Reverend Prebendary Richard Gibson, Rector of St Mary's.
  - The Reverend John Davis MBE, the Stafford Branch Chaplain.
- Beautiful singing of hymns by The Choir of the Collegiate Church of St Mary, under the direction of Margaret Outen (Director of Music) whilst adhering to the Church's safety regulations.
- Lessons read by the following:
  - H.M. Vice Lord Lieutenant, James Leavesley Esq DL.
  - Councillor Tony Nixon, The Worshipful The Mayor of Stafford.
- The superb trumpet playing by Josie Lamplough, from Stafford Grammar School of "The Last Post" and "The Reveille".
- The sermon by the Branch Chaplain, truly brought home the horrors of war, when he reminded us all about the First World War, where Britain suffered 800,000 dead and 1,750,000 injured, and about half of those with life changing injuries which would affect their lives and the lives of their families for ever.

The Chaplain also mentioned his own family experience of The Great War, about his maternal grandfather who was gassed during an attack on the Western Front in 1918, he spent most of the rest of his life in a military hospital, which meant a very tough time for his grandmother trying to bring up 9 children. This hardship, was common post World War 1 and along with crippling unemployment, when there was no welfare state, brought about the creation of The British Legion.

It is extremely regretful that this once in a lifetime Centenary celebration could not have been open for all to attend.

The Stafford Branch would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made this service an outstanding success and fitting for the occasion.

M C GARRETT MBE  
Public Relations Officer  
Stafford Branch  
Royal British Legion