

Winchcombe Branch

Royal British Legion

AGM

Chairman's Report 14th October 2013

I now present my first report as Chairman of the Winchcombe Branch of the Royal British Legion.

The Branch is good health with steady support from the members. Sadly I have to report the death of four members. Edward Lawson-Kimberley our Welfare Officer, Barry Fletcher a former WO2 in the Parachute regiment, Edward Adlard, a former officer in the Hussars and later in the year Alec Keylock, Alec was a long-standing member and for many years helped to raise funds to keep the Branch going in difficult times. Barry Fletcher did not attend committee meetings but was a strong supporter of the Branch and always Paraded on Remembrance Sunday wearing his red beret.

The loss of Edward Lawson Kimberley was a shock to me personally, we had become a good friends and I was very privileged to be the best man at his wedding. I had high expectations of Edward of one-day being Branch Chairman and taking over many important roles. It was sad how only having been married for three months he developed a heart problem and died not long after. Our sympathies must go out to his widow Eleanor.

It was not the ideal way for me to start my year as Chairman by having to give three eulogies at funerals, two of them in the same week at Cheltenham crematorium. All four members will be sadly missed. Special thanks must be extended to Standard Bearer Maurice Fletcher for parading the Standard at all four funerals as well as carrying out his other duties in an excellent manner. Our sympathy must go to Maurice for having to carry the standard at the funeral of his nephew Barry Fletcher.

Remembrance Sunday 2012

There was an excellent turnout for Remembrance Sunday and the weather was good. Our Chaplain the Right Reverend Bishop Peter Firth accompanied by the Reverend John Partington, Father Peter Slocombe conducted the service and Reverend Steve Ward gave an excellent reflection. The Town band and St Peters Choir were in attendance. We were well supported by members of the public.

Once again we are indebted to Lieutenant-Colonel Nigel Woodall and Pates Grammar School Combined Cadet Force for attending. Without them Remembrance Day would not be the same for the branch, also for their generosity in printing all of the service sheets.

Special guests on the saluting base along with the Chairman and members of the Town Council were our friends from the Souvenir François Lt/Col Jean Claud Hamel President, Monsieur Claude Ladue Treasurer. My thanks to Duncan Westerman for hosting them and their wives and also laying two wreaths on behalf of our Branch at French War Cemetery in Cherbourg. Lt/Col Hamel and Monsieur Ladue are now Branch members. I thank Lady Ashcombe for having our guests for drinks at the Castle and Michael Stewart-Richardson for taking them around.

I would like to thank our President Major Tom Hancock DL for not only commanding the parade with distinction on Remembrance Sunday but also for his help and assistance along with Mrs Rosemary Hancock to me throughout the year. We always have and continue to work well together.

We had a problem with the room at our headquarters not being open on the day and the bar had not been stocked beforehand. Complaints were also made that the buffet was left wanting. There were also difficulties for members and visitors on entering the club. Negotiations have taken place between Squadron leader Lane and John Murphy the Club Chairman on how to avoid any problems this year. The Plaisterers Inn will supply the buffet. I welcome John Murphy to his first AGM as a new member of the branch.

Treasurer

Michael Paish our treasurer has kept our accounts in excellent order and is also on hand with any advice if required. Michael works tirelessly behind the scenes and has also attended a course at the County on the new accounting system "Lomas" which is about to be put into use across the RBL. Thank you Michael.

Fundraising

Squadron leader Richard Lane has been keeping a watching brief over our fundraising, ready to swing into action should our funds drop below a certain level. I thank him for his help with Remembrance Sunday and assisting the Branch in any way possible including the printing of the concert tickets.

I would like to thank John Markwick my Vice-Chairman for his constant support and good advice when required.

Poppy Appeal

The Poppy Appeal Concert once more was a tremendous success. The Cheltenham Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Duncan Westerman put on a marvellous program of music. I thank Duncan and the orchestra for turning out and playing for us to raise money for the Poppy appeal. I am delighted that they will be playing for us again this year.

3.

Congratulations are due to our Poppy appeal organiser Mandy Clements-Hunt in achieving sum of £10,14.14 for the year 2012-2013 4.6% up on last year a magnificent achievement. Mandy has worked so hard organising her poppy sellers and various events from quizzes to selling poppy bags, anything that will raise funds for the appeal. As Chairman I am indebted to her for her efforts.

I would particularly like to single out with a special thank you to Jim Shaw. Jim stands on the corner by the Town Hall every year in all weathers and collects a record amount selling his poppies. Once again our President managed to get some impressive Army vehicles from Ashchurch Army Depot on display to start our Poppy Appeal Street collection.

Hon Secretary

As you know at present I am both Branch Hon Secretary and Chairman which turned out not to be easy owing to the top down reorganisation of the RBL. The "Pathway to Growth" initiative meant a big reorganisation of all the areas The County office in Gloucester being closed and the main headquarters now being set up in Bristol. This has created extra work for the Secretary.

I made an appeal at one of our meetings if any member who had a computer would like to assist me with the secretarial side of the branch. After the meeting Reg Collings came forward and volunteered and was eventually appointed assistant secretary. Reg has done a splendid job in helping me with the minutes, notices, and also setting up the Branch Website. I was very impressed with his computer skills. Thank you Reg for your help and assistance.

As your Chairman I attended the County Conference along with the President, I also attended a Chairman's Conference in Bristol where the "Pathway to Growth" was once more discussed. Hard copies of communications are now being sent out as attachments on Email from the County to be printed by the Secretary, a saving on postage and paper for the County office but more expense to the Branch with printer ink and materials.

Membership

With the death of four members and the addition of new members our membership now stands at 58. Many thanks to Captain Shane O'Neill our membership Secretary for the excellent job he has done throughout the year. At the time of writing I have received his resignation as membership secretary as he is moving to live in Cornwall, I am pleased to say he is for the time being remaining a member of the Branch.

Service Committee

With the sudden death of our Welfare Officer our President Major Hancock once more became our Welfare Officer and Chairman of the Welfare Committee. Mandy Clements-Hunt is now assisting him on his visits. John Markwick whilst taking a back seat from visiting remains Welfare Secretary. I thank Major Tom and the Welfare committee for their excellent work.

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Branch Activities

The Branch activities this year there has been a Christmas Lunch at the White Hart, which was well attended, but we did however, experienced problems with the service.

A lent lunch organised by Rosemary Hancock, which raised over £400 for the Poppy Appeal.

A very successful quiz night at the School organised by Mandy with excellent questions being set by Jane Wain and her husband.

Myself and other members attended the Veterans Day service at Gloucester Cathedral and the march through the Town Centre to the Army Museum at the Docks.

It was noticed there was an unprecedented response from the General Public regarding the brutal death of Drummer Lee Rigby in broad daylight in London. So much so, people were laying flowers on the War Memorial. The Branch was given permission from the Town Council to lay a Poppy wreath on the day of his funeral this was duly done with a small ceremony and was removed after 10 days.

The highlight of the year was our outing to RAF Cosford. We had a full coach and everyone enjoyed the day. Once again, many thanks to our President, and his wife Rosemary, for helping with the event.

I would like to conclude my report by thanking you all for your support and particularly the ones who come along and attend our meetings on a regular basis, without your help we would not have a Branch.

John M Welch

Chairman Winchcombe RBL

October 2013