



Chairman's News Update

Dear Member

May 2016

I thought it was about time as your Chairman I wrote to you all and gave you an update on what is going on within the Branch.

As many of you know my dear wife Diane passed away on 29th June last year. As you can well imagine it was a great shock to my family and me. She had been unwell for sometime but her sudden death was not expected.

I thank you all for the many letters and cards I received and those who attended her funeral. I would like to thank our **President Major Tom Hancock, Vice Chairman John Markwick, Squadron Leader Richard Lane, our Treasurer Michael Paish, Derek Knott** for their support and particularly our **Branch Hon Secretary Reg Collings** for taking over and keeping the affairs of the branch in order whilst I was with my family. Reg is doing a fantastic job, for which I am eternally grateful.

County Conference. Our President Major Tom, Reg Collings and myself attended the County Conference in January. We now have **Branch mentor, Ian Ross**. Ian attended one of our meetings and was very informative and helpful.

Mandy Clements-Hunt our Poppy Appeal Organiser, continues to inspire us all with her work rate and her ability to raise money. At present the figure stands at **£8511.00** a wonderful achievement for this time of year. **Mandy** also organised the **Poppy Appeal Concert**, which was a great success. However, on the actual night we were all concerned about the amount of tickets that had been pre-sold. Finally, we ended up having to get more chairs into the room to cater for the amount of people who turned up on the night to buy tickets at the door. So with some anxiety, success was assured. With the School Hall being extended we are now able to put tables out with the chairs, which proved popular.

With some minor problems beforehand the **Remembrance Service and Parade** went off well; the weather was good, however windy on the day. I was a little disappointed on the number of members that came along to our **Complimentary Sherry Reception and Buffet** at our headquarters after the Service, quite a lot of food was left over. I would appeal to you all, even if you cannot attend any of our meetings, that you please make a special effort to attend on **Remembrance Sunday**; it is our flagship event as well as paying homage to the dead of two world wars and other conflicts particularly the recent ones in **Iraq and Afghanistan**. It is particularly nice to meet members on a social basis that we have not seen throughout the year. **Pates CCF** under their new CO **Major Cameron Mackay** were in attendance; we are pleased with their continued support.

100th Anniversary of the Somme

Of all the costly battles fought on the Western front in World War I, the **Somme** has a particular resonance. **On the 1st July 1916 at 7:30am 120,000 men** climbed out of their trenches along an **18-mile front** and began a steady walk through no man's land. By the day's end nearly **60,000** of them had fallen, the worst casualties ever suffered by the **British Army** in a single day. The **Royal British Legion** and the **Western front Association** are commemorating this event by gathering at the local war memorials and blowing three short blasts on a whistle at **7:30 am on Friday 1st July**, the exact time that they went over the top. There will be a 1-minute silence and a solitary wreath will be laid which will remain for a few days. If you are an early riser, please come and join us at our **War Memorial** to pay tribute to all those who were killed or wounded on that first day. One of our members **Jim Mason** accompanied by his son **Sean**, will be actually attending the ceremony at **Thiepval** in France. They will be taking with them a **Winchcombe RBL wreath**.

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Maurice Fletcher our Standard Bearer, retired after 28 years of carrying the Branch Standard, he really has been a credit to the Branch and served us with great distinction. He received a vote of thanks and farewell gifts at our Christmas lunch last year. I am pleased to announce that **Russell Parker** will be our standard bearer on **Remembrance Sunday** this year.

Welfare

The Branch paid out £300 as gifts to our Branch widows at Christmas time.

Future of the Branch

At a recent meeting, as Chairman, I pointed out to the members that I was rather concerned about the future of the Winchcombe Branch. In as much we didn't seem to have any members coming forward particularly younger ones, to take on the various positions at branch level. I myself have no great ambition to going on too long at the helm, like everyone else, advancing years are slowly taking its toll. Ideally, at the next AGM 'If I am re-elected as Chairman, I would like someone appointed Vice-Chairman with a view to taking over as Branch Chairman in the not so distant future.

Many years ago I was appointed **Parade Marshal** for **Remembrance Sunday**. I attended a RBL 3 day course at Dennison Barracks Nr Newbury and qualified for a Certificate. This entitles me to act as the official representative of the RBL.

This involves a great deal of effort. I usually start with the assistance of **Major Tom** preparing for the parade and service as early as September. Operational documents have to be sent to **Tewkesbury Borough Council**, which includes a map of the route, an alternative rout, whilst road closures are in place, risk assessments for all those attending. The various contingents that will be on parade and what police presence we have. These documents along with the parade format (6 A4 pages) signed by **Major Tom and myself** are then presented to the **Tewkesbury Borough Council legal department**. Only then after close scrutiny by them are we given permission, and then send the **road closure notices** to be put up.

Church Service at St Peters, Armistice 2018

You will recall at the **100th anniversary in 2014 of the start of World War I**, we held a **Church Service at St Peter's** which all members of the community and **The Royal British Legion** were invited to attend. This included two classes of school children from the senior school. I'm hoping to organise a similar one to mark the **Anniversary of the Armistice in 2018**.

Hopefully I will be able to continue as Parade Marshal until **100th anniversary of the Armistice, The Remembrance Service and Parade, November 2018 will be rather special**. After that, it is my intention to step down and hand over to an incumbent. I sincerely hope we can get people interested and willing to fill these positions. **The Remembrance Service and Parade are part of the Winchcombe Community** and must continue. I would not like to see us revert back to the old days when we just arrived at the War Memorial, sung a few hymns, laid wreaths with no Parade. It is absolutely vital that we get more help with this event. If you know anyone who might be interested in joining us to preserve the future of the Branch please encourage him or her to do so.

RBL National Memorial Arboretum

The Royal British Legion National Arboretum is a very popular destination for a visit. It is changing all the time and is being added too nearly every other day. Recently **Her Majesty the Queen** was seen unveiling a **Commemorative Plaque to The Kings own Border Regiment**. With the help of Reg Collings, our Secretary I am willing to organise an outing once again to the Arboretum possibly late summer or early autumn if we can fill a small coach. If you are interested in going please let our either Reg or I know and we will make the necessary arrangements and set a date to suit you all.

Dates for your Diary

30th May Bank Holiday Monday,
Street fair in Winchcombe. We have a stall with new Poppy bags and Somme badges for sale.

Friday July 1st
Remembering the first Day of the Somme. Winchcombe War Memorial 7.20 am

Monday 11th July
Branch meeting, 7.30 Conservative WM Club All members welcome

Monday 29th August
Winchcombe Country Show We will have a stall, all profits to the Poppy Appeal. The RBL Bikers Branch will be joining us.

Monday September 12th
Branch Meeting 7.30 Conservative WM Club, all members welcome

Monday October 10th
Branch Annual General Meeting. Chairman's Report, Treasurers Report Elections of officers, Secretary's Report, Membership, Poppy Appeal, Welfare reports. A.O.B.

Saturday 29th October
Poppy Appeal Concert Winchcombe Senior School 7.30 pm

Monday 7th November
Branch Meeting 7.30pm Conservative WM Club (finalise arrangements for Remembrance Sunday).

Sunday 13th November
Remembrance Service and Parade. 10.30 am Abbey Terrace. All marchers to meet at the Fire Station 10.15 am

December
Branch Christmas Lunch, Corner Cupboard Inn (date to be announced)

I thank you all for your continued support.

Best Wishes

John Welch

John M Welch
Chairman & Parade Marshal
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