

**Winchcombe Branch
Annual General Meeting
Chairman's Report 2017**

The Branch is continuing to function well with no members deaths reported. However, on Saturday morning I was informed of the death of John Train who died in Cleeve Hill Nursing home where he was residing. John was a member for many years but resigned sometime ago when going into the home. We have lost two members a Mr Kelly from Cheltenham and Mr Reg White who is now with the Stow Branch. Membership with the addition of a new member Mr Bruce Anderson is 49.

One of our French members Monsieur Claude Ledoux has experienced a long illness and is now recovering at home. At our September meeting all the members present signed a get-well card, which was delivered to him by Duncan Westerman. I thank Duncan for doing this and also keeping me informed on his progress.

Our President Major Tom Hancock is still causing me some concern with his Hospital visits and regular attendance at the Doctors Surgery. I am pleased to say at the time of writing he is very much improved albeit a little unsteady.

Our remaining D-Day veteran Bill Parker is in good form and will be with us again this year. He again travelled twice to France with his family for D-Day and other celebrations. I see Bill quite regularly, in which he regales me of his latest visit to France and to the D-Day beaches.

I have received notification from the President of the Stanway & District Branch that they had finally decided to discontinue their Branch through lack of support. They have requested that whether any of there remaining members could join our branch. Their membership number at present is nine. I have written to them say they would be most welcome should they decided to do so.

Remembrance Service & Parade

The Remembrance Service and Parade went well but with some problems. Both the RBL and the Fire Service were down in numbers on parade this resulted in large gaps on the Terrace, which had to be closed up. On arrival at the Terrace there was one vehicle, which had not been moved. It was in such a strategic position that is caused a big problem on arrival, as the Scouts, Cubs and Brownies could not proceed to their place without travelling around the offending vehicle. The RBL Contingent prematurely halted on the Terrace on the Command the Cadet CO when they should have carried on. This was soon rectified but it looked chaotic. The situation was not helped when I as Parade Marshal whilst busy watching what was transpiring stepped into large water filled pothole and falling over, needless to say this did cause some amusement.

Fortunately I was unhurt but with a loss of dignity. With the incident having being witnessed by the Town Council the offending pothole was filled in the very next morning. There will now be an inspection of the area prior to the Remembrance Service by the Council every year. All in all our arrival at the Terrace left a lot to be desired.

My thanks go to our Chaplain The Rt Rev Bishop Peter Firth, and the other clergy for conducting the Service. The Rev John Paul Hoskins gave the reflections. Thanks to John Murphy, the Conservative Club Secretary for ensuring the club was ready afterwards.

Pates Grammar School CCF turned out three detachments of Cadets. My thanks go to Major Cameron MacKay their Commanding Officer.

It was good to see that their old bandmaster Phil Meakin with the Cadet Band and a vast improvement in the playing and the correct marching pace. However, for some reason the Band placed them themselves at the head of the column. In the twenty-six years of being Parade Marshal it's the first time this has happened and was contrary to the instructions on the Parade Document. The result being that as they so far in front of the RBL that when proceeding along North Street and into the High Street the drums were echoing off the buildings which made it difficult to keep step.

I would like to thank the pupil from Pates Grammar School for the excellent reading during the Service. I thank Russell Parker our vice Chairman who has now been appointed Branch Standard Bearer for the way he carried the Standard on Parade. Russell attended a Parade Marshals Course in London and is now allowed to assist me. He has to take a further course before he gets his Parade Marshal Certificate.

I am also delighted that Maurice Fletcher our Standard Bearer for many years has had his knee operation, which was successful. Maurice has informed me that if required he will carry the standard at any time our Standard Bearer is unable to do so.

Unfortunately once again our French members were unable to attend but kindly sent a 100 euros donation for the branch funds. We reciprocated in a small way by sending over some RBL member's badges for them to wear. The number of members who came along to our Sherry reception and Buffet after the service up on last year, which was good.

11.11.11.

We had a good turnout of members and others at the Town Hall for 11.11.11. Our Chaplain The Rt Rev Peter Firth led the prayers and silence.

Lent Lunch

Rosemary Hancock once again organised another successful Lent Lunch, which £555 was raised for the Poppy Appeal, My thanks go to Rosemary and her helpers, as well as John Markwick and his wife Sheila for organising the raffle. Sad to say this it was Rosemary's last lunch. Thank you Rosemary excellent way you organised the lunch. Everyone is agreed you will be sorely missed and in many ways irreplaceable.

Poppy Appeal

With Mandy's hard work and diligence the Poppy Appeal at the time of this report stands at £10,300 a staggering amount and remarkable achievement, this would have been more but the extra donation promised by Travellers Finds from the sale of their Poppy's did not materialise. My thanks also go to Sarah Yetman for assisting Mandy.

Poppy Appeal Concert

Once again our poppy appeal Concert took place once again at Winchcombe Senior School. We had the Winchcombe Concert Brass and The Winchcombe Community choir. The Community Choir turned out to be a little disappointing but nevertheless everyone seemed to be enjoying it all and a profit was made.

Welfare

All has been quiet on the welfare front with no cases having to be dealt with by the Branch. However we did have a Mrs Latham who lives in Winchcombe requested help after the death of her husband, He was a timeserving Army man but not a branch member. Our Welfare officer Major Tom Hancock made a number of visits. As there was no one else available I attended the funeral with the Standard.

General

I along with our President and Hon Secretary attended the County Conference in January.

Roger Shakespeare accompanied by Duncan Westerman kindly laid two RBL wreaths at the French Ceremony in Cherbourg.

Social

We had an excellent attendance for our Branch Christmas Lunch at the Corner Cupboard Inn. Once again the food and the service were excellent and was enjoyed by all.

Finally, I would like to thank the following, our President Major Tom Hancock for his support throughout the year and the excellent way he commanded the Remembrance Parade.

Squadron leader Richard Lane our fundraiser for his help and support and sound constructive advice when required. Also John Williams for his regular attendance and good advice when needed.

Our treasurer Michael Paish, who works diligently and tirelessly to keep our accounts in good order, whilst once again, having to adapt to the various changes in accounting sent from Head Office. A big thank you Michael for your patience and perseverance. We owe you a great debt.

Mandy Clements-Hunt, for her continued enthusiasm, dedication to her role as P.A.O.

Roger Shakespeare for his continued support. The Town Council, for taking on the task of putting out our cones and collecting them up after the service.

Sadly Reg Collings our Hon Secretary who also takes on the role as Membership Secretary has asked if could stand down. Reg really has been great help; he goes about his business in a quiet unassuming way, totally reliable. I am sorry to see him go. When finding myself with an unexpected illness, which required many visits the hospital. Reg has been an inspiration to me having gone through a similar problem a few years ago. He accompanied me to hospital on occasion gave me great comfort and support. I am pleased to say the Reg and his wife Daphne has become good friends.

Reg I thank you most sincerely for the work you have done as Secretary it has been appreciated by all the Branch members. John Murphy has agreed to take on the role as Secretary. I had the pleasure of working alongside John for a short time as a member of the club committee so I know we will be in good hands. Fortunately he is also a neighbour of Reg so help and advice will be close of hand if needed.

As many of you already know I would like to step down from being Chairman and Parade Marshal after the Remembrance Service and Parade in November 2018. I really feel I have done my bit and time to hand over the reins to a fresh face. It will be the 100th Anniversary of the Armistice, a very special occasion. Of course I am concerned about the succession that is why I am giving good notice. The Branch is getting smaller in numbers and members are getting older. None of us can carry on forever. I repeat what I have said many times that one-way or another we must encourage new and particularly younger members to join us to take on the various positions need for the smooth running of the branch. The Winchcombe Branch of The Royal British Legion is an instrumental part of the community and we must endeavour to keep it going.

That concludes my report as Chairman. I thank all the members for their support.

John m Welch

**John M Welch
Chairman & Parade Marshal
Winchcombe Branch, The Royal British Legion**