



## Chairman's News Update

Dear Member

August 2018

The time has come for me as your Chairman to write to you all and give you an update on what is going on within the Branch. Particularly for the members who for one reason or another are unable to attend our Branch meetings.

As many of you will know **2018** is a very important year for the **Royal British Legion**, it being the **100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice**, which marked the end of the **Great War 1918**. The RBL are running quite a few events nationally over the year. **Remembrance Sunday** this year conveniently falls on the **11<sup>th</sup> November** and will be a big event for the Branch.

It is my intention to step down as **Chairman and Parade Marshal** immediately after the **Remembrance Service and Parade this year**. I have been Parade Marshal for 30 years, also Secretary, Vice Chairman, and for the last few years **Branch Chairman**. I will soon be 80. After finding myself with Cancer, which was discovered after my annual review in 2017, I have decided to call it a day. I am pleased to say my cancer was caught in its early stages and I am now in remission. However, not without having to go through a course of Radio Therapy every day for eight weeks at **Cheltenham General Hospital**. This unfortunately is really taking some time for me to recover. Others tell me it could be 18 months before one is anything like back to normal.

### Church Service at St Peters, Armistice 2018

You will recall at the **100<sup>th</sup> 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. The Branch will be holding another Service this year on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2pm at St Peters Church** this time to commemorate the **armistice 2018** which marked the end of the **Great War**. Once again, all members of the Community and Winchcombe School will be in attendance. **Our County President Air Vice Marshal Ian Corbit** has signified his attendance and hopefully the attendance of County Standards and other members of the County Committee. There will be refreshments provided afterwards at our headquarters The Conservative WM club.

### Major Tom Hancock DL

Our President **Major Tom Hancock** has been unwell for some time now. He insisted on taking charge of last year's **Remembrance Parade**. He was unable to march from the Fire Station so for the second year running I brought the Parade down from the Fire Station to Abbey Terrace and handed over to him. He commanded the Parade with his usual distinction; he then took place in the march past but had to fall out by Lloyds Bank. I did receive one or two representations saying they were worried about his health and he should not continue. I did not at the time make any comment as I knew how important the Parade was to Major Tom. I am now looking at this in a different perspective, just after his **90<sup>th</sup> Birthday** he was admitted to the **Cardiac Ward at Cheltenham General Hospital** where he remained for nearly three weeks. I visited him on several occasions; I was very concerned about his well being. After leaving hospital he was ordered by the Doctor to have at least three months bed rest at home which meant staying in bed, resting and just getting up for an hour or so a day.

Tom started feeling better and went out only to find that he had a slight relapse. I saw him again recently and he is progressing but very weak.

As **Parade Marshal** and being responsible for the health and safety of all on Parade and after consultation with **Branch Officials** and **Major Tom**. I have invited **Colonel Lance Ranson TD** to take charge and command our Parade; starting this year and for the foreseeable future. Lance is very capable of this; he has had **Sandhurst Training** and was commissioned into the **Grenadier Guards**. He is President of **The Gloucestershire Grenadier Guards Association**, which incorporates **The Gloucestershire Guards**, which I myself am a member. He is also **Chairman of The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Yeomanry Association**

Colonel Ranson was also Commandant of the **Gloucestershire Army Cadet Force** so he knows **Pates Grammar School CCF** well - they parade with us every year. It is satisfying for me to know our parade will be commanded with such distinction and is in good hands. I sincerely hope our **President Major Tom Hancock** will be with us but seated on the Terrace where he will be offered all courtesies due to his rank and status as our President. Hopefully he will then join the Chairman and members of the Town Council on the saluting base for the march past.

Afterwards our headquarters **The Conservative WM Club** have allowed us to have the Ground Floor Room, as this year will be a special occasion. The Branch would like all members, wives, and partners to come along and avail themselves of our **Complimentary Sherry Reception and Buffet** a good turnout is needed on this special day.

### **Poppy Appeal**

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 **£7906.06** a wonderful achievement for this time of year.

### **Stanway & District Branch**

Sadly, our neighbours the **Stanway & District Branch Royal British Legion** are disbanding through lack of support and will be laying up their Standard in **Stanway Church**. Our Branch has offered them help and support in them doing this. Hopefully the remaining members will come and join us at our meetings. Their **Poppy appeal organiser** has been in touch and asked if we would supply their wreaths. They have also offered some of their poppy collection boxes, which Mandy has agreed to take on.

### **Membership**

We have 3 new members. Our membership figure is now 47.

As it will be my final Remembrance Service and Parade as your Chairman the Branch Committee are allowing me the honour of laying the RBL Wreath on the day. My Son Andrew who as many of you knows is a Warrant Officer Class 1 in the Royal Navy will be laying the Royal Navy wreath alongside me. My grandson Jack who is also in the Royal Navy hopefully will also be on Parade. So, there will be three generations of the Welch family in attendance, a proud moment for my family and myself.

Thank you all for your help and support over the last year. I look forward to seeing many of you at our Church Service and Remembrance Service.

Yours sincerely,

*John Welch*

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