



The Royal British Legion Stamford Branch

Formed 7 June 1922

Websites: <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/stamford>
<http://www.facebook.com/RBLStamford>
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Affiliated with : 2 Squadron (Stamford Detachment), Lincolnshire Army Cadet Force, 2005
: 2071 (Stamford) Squadron, Air Training Corps, 2007
Twinned with Isle of Bute Branch, Royal British Legion Scotland, 2009

President: D.W. Gladman. Gren.Guards
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Hon. Treasurer: K. Mellowes
Membership/Subs Secretary: S. Bonde
Welfare Representative: R. Bidwell-Bonde
Branch Honorary Chaplain: The Rev. Canon Dr Donald Gray, CBE, TD

Editor: Steve Bonde
31 Clare Close, Stamford, PE9 2QA
Tel: 01780 757041
e-mail: srbonde@hotmail.com

Distribution: Marian Freeman &
Roy Prentice

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Newsletter – January 2013

Branch Christmas Dinner



General view

Some 90 of us again enjoyed the generosity of the Royal Artillery for our Christmas Dinner this year. This took place in the WO's & Sgts' Mess on 14 December where the glitter of candlelight on the glassware and silver made us all feel very welcome.

John Copeland opened the evening, on behalf of the Branch, with a brief review of 2012.

Membership now stood at 267, and growing; the Poppy Appeal last year topped a massive £41,000 and we hoped that this year's result would be about the same; we continue to do our job, but it would help if we could all work a little

harder; and we have close relations with the military, making sure that they know what we do and that we support them as well as the 'old 'uns'. He thanked everyone for all their support, regretted the loss of too many good friends during the year, and hoped that we could all keep things moving in 2013.

SWO Steve Marshall, representing RAF Wittering, thanked 16 Regiment RA, the catering staff and their volunteers for their hospitality, saying that such joint events were vital to our respective organisations. He holds our Branch in high esteem, especially for our vibrancy and our welfare work on RAF Wittering. In return he had himself worked with our Poppy Appeal for the past five years. The Poppy Appeal was in fact a valuable opportunity for young airmen and women to meet and to listen to the older generation and to learn that the Legion is also for them, not just past generations. He said how reassuring it was to know that the Legion was there, ready if necessary to fight their corner.



What to choose?

We were welcomed on behalf of the RSM by WO Baz Daniels who said that 16 Regiment RA are still very busy, with operations in three theatres and 400 gunners employed at one time this year in Afghanistan, Falklands, and (hardest of all!) the Olympics. He referred to the problems which soldiers expect to meet as the Army shrinks to 80,000 (less than Tesco) and thanked the Royal British Legion for all its support. He added that modern soldiers very much understand, and welcome what the Legion does for them. He concluded by calling for toasts to *The Fallen* and *The Deployed*.

John Copeland replied, referring to the parcels which we have been sending to the troops, including 16 Regiment RA, over many years now. He then asked for a vote of thanks for our hosts and especially for the serving staff, all volunteers who should have been on Christmas leave. Next he led an auction of a limited edition print by Graham Cooke, of *The Cullins, Isle of Skye*, which was eventually snapped up by Bill Howard for a goodly sum.

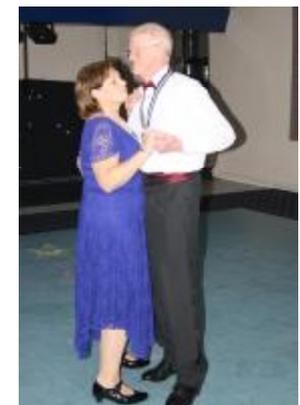
Roy & Marian ran a splendid raffle which raised a magnificent £173, thanks to their efforts and to all those who had brought excellent prizes. Winding up, John Copeland thanked Gary for the disco, everyone for coming, Steve Barker for bringing so much excellent wine and port, and wished everyone a Happy Christmas and Good New Year. In conclusion Darren Rawnsley led a well-deserved toast to John himself for all our successes in what has been a difficult year. And we all signed a secret birthday card for Pat Savory, who was a birthday girl on Christmas Day.



The top table



Bill Howerd receives the Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of P.C.Howerd Ltd for their continuing support



Someone had to dance with the Chairman!

Poppy Appeal Party



David Collins receives his certificate from Bob Sandall and Richard Hill

It was bitterly cold outside but ninety of us, Cllr Bob Sandall, the Mayor of Stamford, Grp Capt Richard Hill and, most importantly our Poppy Appeal volunteers from outside the Branch gathered at Cummins Club to enjoy our Poppy Appeal Party. We also welcomed Geoff Smith (transferring in from Portugal!) and his friend Joyce, and Jayne Arscott (back from deeds of derring-do in Afghanistan) and her husband, Mike.

Jim Rimmington reported that our Poppy Appeal has so far raised £33,400, a remarkable success given the economic climate. The totals raised in the supermarkets were: Waitrose £5960.88, Morrisons £9318.47, and Sainsburys £4008.97. He also said that he and Pauline were standing down and thanked everyone who had helped them during the past 6 years, in particular John & Beryl Ingham for doing the hard yards in distributing the Poppy boxes, Alan Patrick for his massive effort in getting the members out to the collection points, and Gordon Williams for his IT backup. Bob Sandall and Richard Hill then gave

out our Poppy Appeal Certificates to our star individual and corporate collectors who had each raised over £100. Bob said that he was amazed at the hard work we put in to our Poppy Appeal and how we persuade the populace to donate with such a smile. Richard Hill also paid tribute, saying that we were his first contact with the Legion and that he had been so impressed by our efforts that he had joined our Branch. He hoped to maintain the association for years to come.

Next was the presentation of the Long Service Awards to our Poppy collectors:
5 years: Joyce Burton, Derek Burton, Brian & Elizabeth Gibbons, Ron Garfitt, John Garfield, Brian & Pat Savory, Tony Purkiss, Ken Plant, Steve Marshall, Gordon & Jean Williams; Tony Whitting, and June Pape

10 years: Hugh McNeill, Graeme Creedy, Roy & Jill Lemmon

15 years: Marian Freeman, Paddy Moore, Steve Bonde, Frank & Pat Magee

20 years: John Copeland, Derek Gladman, Roy Prentice

30 years: Cate Goodwin



Cate Goodwin has been collecting for the Poppy Appeal in the High Street outside Boots since they were Bootees!



Graham Cooke auctioning his print

Next on the agenda – it was a busy night! – was the auction of a splendid print by Graham Cooke of a Mark 8 Spitfire over the Needles. The aircraft shown is still flying hence the title of the picture *'Still looking for trouble'*. The owner of the Spitfire bought Graham's original painting for £1000 and, after a keen auction among our members, the print raised a further £100.

And finally ... we were entertained by the Irish band *Shillelagh* who led us all into all those favourite Irish songs. At one point we were happily warbling *'I will if you will, so will I'* to the chorus

of *Coming round the mountain*! The end of one of the best evenings in years, breaking up well after 11.00pm, raising £139 on the raffle, enjoying a buffet, and embarrassing Shaun on his birthday – he's not as young as he would have you think!



Shillelagh in full swing

Branch Governance

Our Royal Charter states that every Branch must hold regular meetings of its members to carry out its Legion business. Every Branch must also elect a Committee whose duty is to promote actively the objects of the Branch within its geographical area. From time to time we set out here, for the benefit of recently recruited members, how we govern Stamford Branch within these guidelines and what roles are open to members in that governance.

Until 2006 the Committee met each month and then a General Meeting of members also met formally each month to consider the same issues and agree what action, if any, to take. Such business began to take up the entire evenings of the General Meetings, so we agreed that it would be much more efficient, and free up the General Meetings for more social activities, if the routine, humdrum business were all dealt with just in Committee. Any business of special interest or essential importance or involving major expenditure is referred to General Meeting for formal consideration and decision. Members retain the right to hold the Committee to account at any monthly or Extraordinary General Meeting and the Branch must, of course, hold its Annual General Meeting each October or November.

It was important however to maintain full openness and democracy in handling Branch business in Committee. It was therefore also agreed that:

- all Branch Members are not merely welcome but are encouraged to attend and take an active part in Committee discussions;
- Minutes of such meetings are available to any Member on request to the Branch Secretary;
- and this newsletter also reports fully on the various issues under consideration.

Copies of the minutes of the AGM on 16 October, for example, are available now.



Branch Christmas Tree

How many of you went to see our Branch Christmas Tree this year? It was on display in St John's Church last month as part of their annual *Christmas Tree & Crib Festival* and again it was a team effort between Colin Francis and Bill & Lana Wells.

The theme this year was *Peace in our Time* and, as you can see, featured little paper doves of peace with the motif of our Branch 90th anniversary badge and the statement *Still caring*.

Once again we are indebted to Colin, Bill and Lana for displaying such inspiration and

sensitivity on behalf of the Branch.

Branch Coach Outings

We would like to organise a couple of coach outings next year. The question is where would members like to go to? Suggestions so far include the Birmingham Tattoo, the Manchester Ship Canal, Bletchley Park, the National Memorial Arboretum, and a round trip to RAF Scampton (*Red Arrows, Fire Service Museum*)/RAF Coningsby (*BBMF*)/ ex-RAF now JSSU Digby (*WWII Ops Room*).

These are all extremely interesting and rewarding places to visit. Please let me know if you would like to go to any of these, and which one. No response – no outing.

County Conference, 12 January

The County's Annual Conference 2013 will take place in Horncastle on 12 January. I shall be your Branch delegate when I shall propose our Motion, agreed at our AGM in October, that the National Conference be given back the power to consider issues on the administration of the Legion. I shall also support a Motion by Bourne Branch that 12 months' free Legion membership be offered to all Service personnel on their discharge from the Armed Forces.

This year's guest of honour will be Sue Freeth, the RBL Director of Operations. We hope to ask her what a *Director of Operations* does.

A number of us will go there in the Branch minibus. There is still room for anyone else who fancies a day out and who would like to see how the Legion operates at County level.

Lifts to Hospital

A member has been going through a hard time recently. He himself had a series of visits to Peterborough City Hospital for various tests. His wife was an in-patient over the whole Christmas period – the second such protracted stay in two months. He can no longer drive and has no car. His choice was to spend most of every day trekking there and back on our so-called public transport (when it runs), or spending a fortune on taxis; a visit to his wife on Christmas Day cost him £40. Unless, of course, the rest of us are prepared to rally around and take him and others there ourselves.

Two or three of us have been giving him lifts when possible. But we need more help. Could more members please come forward to help when members are in distress? I know it is a spittingly abhorrent word and concept, but we do need *volunteers*. How many members are prepared to help?

Membership Subs

We continue to make slow progress on collecting cash-paying members' subs, and 27 are still adrift. I brought all the new membership cards and gubbins to the Poppy Appeal Party on 1 December to exchange for your hard-earned, but not one came to pay their subs. We are down to the hard core.

Time is running out. But you can still send me a 'Royal British Legion' cheque for £14 and SAE (as several members have done) to me at 31 Clare Close, Stamford, PE9 2QA. Also alternatively, I can call on you **in exchange for a direct debit**. Let me know – 01780 757041. Finally I shall bring all the paraphernalia to the *New Members' Social/Any Questions'* evening on 15 January. After that any unclaimed membership cards will go back to HQ the following day.

Steve Bonde

Membership Secretary

In brief...



Arctic Star/

Bomber Command Clasp

The Prime Minister announced on 19 December that an Arctic Star is to be issued to veterans of the WWII Arctic Convoys to Russia and that a clasp would be issued to veterans of Bomber Command. More than 3000 sailors and airmen died in the Arctic Convoys and 55,000 in Bomber Command.

No further details are yet available but the Government has been urged to issue these awards without any further delay. There are believed to be only some 200 Arctic Convoy veterans still alive. Time is no longer a luxury the brave men of either campaign have on their side. We look forward to our member, Ian Mowat, wearing his Arctic Star as soon as possible.



Branch Welfare

The Branch Committee have elected Rob Bidwell-Bonde as the Branch Welfare Representative. If you hear of any ex- or current Service person or dependent who needs Legion help, please contact Rob on 763675.



World War I Centenary

The Royal British Legion has issued an advance notice of intent to commemorate the beginning of WWI in 2014. Some of us consider that there is not much to celebrate in the beginning of a world war and that any real celebrations should await the centenary of the Armistice in 1918. However your Committee would welcome any suggestions and ideas on how our Branch might commemorate 1914.



Scrivens Specs

Members of a certain vintage will know that, every now and again, we remind our Members that we, and our families, enjoy a discount at Scrivens in Stamford on their range of specs and other services. It used to be a straight 10%, but is now a flat £30 reduction of the final bill and a flat £10 charge for an eye test (if you do not already qualify for a free test). You do not need any discount cards; simply tell them that you are a Legion Member.



A very nice spread

Amber's Vintage Tea Party

Sad to report there was poor support from members for Amber and her friends when they put on their *Vintage Tea Party* on 8 December. In fact there were fewer than half a dozen of us. Which is a shame because they had put in a lot of work decorating the Congregational Hall, baking cakes, buns and muffins, preparing copious gallons of tea, setting out craft stalls, and organising dance groups, 1940s singers and cake lovers from all over Lincolnshire.

Fortunately there was a reasonable turnout of non-Legion people who enjoyed a pleasant afternoon of tea and cakes, singing, lots of chat, and a raffle which raised £65 for the Branch. Event organizer, Lucy Clare, pictured here, is really keen to raise as much money as she can for the Branch through her tea parties and has said that she will be in touch again in 2013 if they hold another.



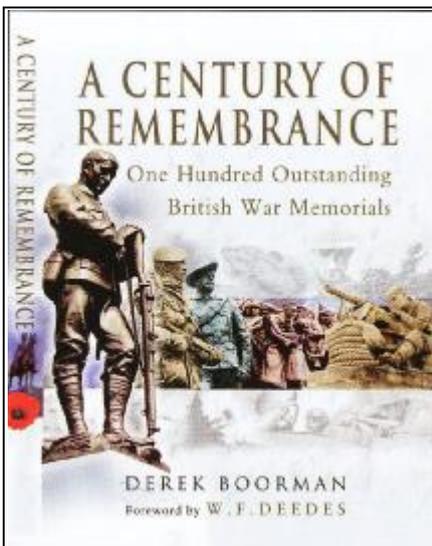
Amber the Gatekeeper



Lucy Clare

Poppy Appeal

The final amount raised in our 2011/12 Poppy Appeal was £41,266.79. We have so far banked £33,663.01 for the current 2012/13 Poppy Appeal. Both these figures reflect immense credit on the generosity of the people of Stamford who clearly identify closely with our nearby military bases and their personnel. They are also a massive tribute to the talent and sheer hard work of Jim & Pauline Rimmington who have now stepped down after running our Poppy Appeal so successfully for the past six years. And of course these figures reflect also on the wonderful help which we get from all our volunteers during the Poppy Appeal, the street collectors, those who stand for hours in the supermarkets, the back-room organizers, the distributors and everyone who contribute so much or just a little to such impressive results. Thank you, all!!



The above book, published in 2005, is a study of 100 outstanding UK war memorials commemorating 20th century conflicts from the Boer War to the Falklands and Gulf Wars. Each entry is highly informative with a description of the memorial's background and significance with photographs of the whole and detail. It would make an excellent Christmas present and is available at a special Christmas price of £10 (inc p&p) from: Frances Moreton, Director, War Memorials Trust, Freepost RSCE-GKJS-BSLT, 2nd Floor, 42a Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 0RE

COMING EVENTS

- Saturday, 12 Jan County Conference, Horncastle
- Monday, 14 Jan Troops Parcels Packing, Clare Close (2-4.00pm)
- 15 & 16 Jan Welfare Workshop, RAF Wittering
- Tuesday, 15 Jan New Members Social/ 'Any Questions'
- Thursday, 24 Jan Welfare Workshop, St George's Barracks
- Friday, 22 Feb Branch Market Stall

Parcels for the Troops

Brian & Pat Savory are organizing a packing of parcels for the troops at Clare Close at 2.00pm on Monday, 14 January. This will be our final batch of parcels. We detect a general feeling that the worst is over for our Armed Forces in Afghanistan, that the casualties are falling, and that it is only a matter of time before the troops come home. As a result the flow of materials coming in for the parcels has all but dried up and we are down to our last £300 or so in our Parcels fund.

We shall of course need lots of helpers to pack these last parcels and to take them to the Post Office, so why don't we 'celebrate' this last session with a few mince pies, drinkies perhaps etc.

Peter Scriven

I regret to report that our member and colleague, Peter Scriven, passed away on 2 January after several months of illness. I do not of course have details of Peter's funeral yet but many of us will want to pay our respects on the day. Please contact me in a few days time.

I am sure that I speak for all when I send Grace and her family our very deepest condolences on her loss.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

1900 hrs, Tuesday, 8 January, Clare Close Community Room

NEXT BRANCH SOCIAL

2000 hrs, Tuesday, 15 January, Cummins Club

A very Happy, Prosperous (*Fat chance!*), and Healthy New Year to everyone from our Chairman, Committee, *et moi!*
Steve Bonde, Editor

